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## Flag Planting and Mapmaking: English Claims to North America

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# FLAG PLANTING AND MAPMAKING

English Claims to North America

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A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Lyon G. Tyler Department of History

The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

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by


Andrew Keith Sturtevant

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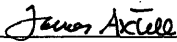
# APPROVAL SHEET

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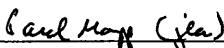
Master of Arts

  
Andrew Keith Sturtevant

Approved by the Committee, May 2005

  
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To Mom and Dad for their encouragement and support

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## ABSTRACT

Arguing that the methods by which early-modern European powers symbolically claimed New World territory constituted neither ossified international law nor a set of mutually incomprehensible national practices, this thesis suggests that European princes shared a flexible but fairly consistent lexicon of claiming practices. As exploration narratives demonstrate, aspiring emperors and empresses might have emphasized different symbols and exploited the system's ambiguity when convenient, but they all placed some value in symbolic ceremonies of possession, official writs, and actual possession, and largely respected their rival's territorial rights. Among the mutually, if tacitly, accepted symbols of possession, New World cartography powerfully asserted claims of possession. In addition to their utilitarian roles, maps served as symbolic texts which inscribed European hegemony directly onto the New World. A survey of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century English maps of the Chesapeake reveals the ways in which early-modern cartographers used place-names, "decorative" cartouches, and other visual clues to suggest European hegemony over the Americas. Far from neutral representations of space, maps made powerful statements about land and power.

## FLAG PLANTING AND MAPMAKING

## INTRODUCTION

### MIRRORS OF DESIRE

At first glance John and Virginia's Farrer's 1651 map of "Old Virginia and New" (Map 1) appears to be a simple representation of the colony, albeit a whimsically inaccurate one. Lacking a way to measure longitude, the Farrers evidently assumed that the Sierra Nevada, which Indians on the Pacific coast had described to Sir Francis Drake when he landed there, were the same mountains as the Appalachians, about which eastern Indians had told the English on the Atlantic coast, and hence that the continent was very narrow. As a result, the cartographers portray North America as a thin spit of land between "The Sea of China and the Indies" and the Atlantic. Indeed, an overland journey from the head of the James River to the Pacific Ocean, the Farrers judge, would not exceed "ten dayes." Furthermore, the cartographers fill the map with exotic animals and plants, some of which never graced the forests of North America.

Yet for all its befuddled topography, the map is abundantly clear in demonstrating English attitudes toward, and intentions for, the land. By placing English ships flying St. George's Cross on both sides of the continent, for example, the Farrers reinforce the English claim to the territory between. If this were not enough, they place the names New Albion (the name Drake gave to California) and Virginia to remind European princes and English subjects alike that the land belonged to neither European competitors nor Indian peoples. In addition to establishing English ownership of the land, the



proximity of the Atlantic to the Pacific demonstrates that the continent might be easily traversed and a trade route with Asia could be opened with little effort.

Read in this way, the Farrers' map reinforces England's claims to vast tracts of the New World and reflects England's imperialistic agenda. As cartographic historian J. Brian Harley observed, maps are not simply scientific or objective representations of geographical space, but inevitably convey, intentionally or not, the attitudes of the mapmakers' society and patrons. Especially in respect to imperial nations, maps serve to express and to legitimize the metropolis's cultural and political hegemony over its colonies. Yet Harley's iconoclastic theories have provoked substantial criticism from more traditional and more radical students of cartography, who dispute the essential rhetorical nature of maps and insist that a map, as often as not, is just a map. The English-made maps of the Chesapeake and southeastern North America in the early colonization period, such as the Farrar's, provide a test case determining the extent to which maps echoed and reinforced English claims to territory or simply reflected more pedestrian and artistic purposes. In order to understand the role of maps, however, it is essential to realize that cartography was merely one of many ways by which early modern European metropolises sought to acquire territory in the New World.<sup>1</sup>

Casting an envious eye toward gold-glutted Spanish galleons and thriving Portuguese *feitorias*, Englishmen began weighing the potential advantages of New World colonization. In his weighty prospectus of New World colonization, *A Discourse of Western Planting*, the younger Richard Hakluyt, an Anglican clergyman and secretary to

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<sup>1</sup> J. Brian Harley, *The New Nature of Maps*, ed. Paul Laxton, intro by J.H. Andrews (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001) 35.

the French ambassador, outlined such advantages of American colonies to Elizabeth I.<sup>2</sup> Western planting, Hakluyt argued, would be a virtual panacea for England's economic and social ills. As had the Spanish, English colonists were sure to find gold that would fill English coffers, and, perhaps, the fabled Northwest Passage—the Holy Grail of American exploration—whereby the English could trade with Asian markets. Besides gold, such colonies would provide England with “*all the commodities of Europe, Affrica, and Asia*” and hence invigorate the country's flagging trade. Naturalist and member of the first colony at Roanoke, Thomas Harriot, confirmed Hakluyt's assertions by exhaustively cataloguing the commodities that he had discovered in his stay in Virginia. The New World offered lumber, furs, silk worms, and soil sufficient to grow plentiful crops. America also provided a market for English manufactures. Indians as well as colonists could be expected to purchase English-made products. Coarse woolen garments, for example, would be greatly valued in the boreal regions of North America. Both colonial industries and domestic manufactures would furthermore create jobs for the unemployed Englishmen who would otherwise become vagrants or pirates.<sup>3</sup>

Establishing New World colonies would furthermore undermine the noisome Spanish and “*bringe [Spain's] kinge Phillippe from his high Throne*” by conquering his empire. Such colonies could be bases for privateers who could harass Spanish shipping and capture unwary galleons. Spurred on by Bartolomé de Las Casas' depiction of Spanish cruelty toward their Indian vassals and the resultant Indian resistance to their Spanish overlords, Hakluyt concluded that the natives could be easily enticed into

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<sup>2</sup> Hereafter, every reference to Richard Hakluyt is to Richard Hakluyt the younger, chaplain to the English ambassador to France, and not to Hakluyt's uncle and fellow advocate of colonization, Richard Hakluyt the elder.

<sup>3</sup> Hakluyt, *Discourse of Western Planting*, ed., David B. Quinn and Alison M. Quinn (London: Hakluyt Society, 1993), 16-19,

destroying the Spanish empire with English help and encouragement. Moreover, it was Protestant England's sacred duty to bring the benighted Indians "*from darknes to lighte, from falsehood to truth,*" especially before Spanish missionaries deluded them with Catholic "superstition."<sup>4</sup>

Before the English could realize the prospective advantages of colonization, however, they had to secure title to New World territory before other European princes claimed all the available lands. If "we doo procrastinate plantinge," Hakluyt warned Elizabeth, England would "comme to[o] late and a day after the faire," and find itself excluded from North American colonization. Haste, then, was needed lest England be left behind in the imperialistic scramble. But how, according to the early modern Europeans, could a monarch establish title to *terra nullius*? Was it sufficient simply to be the first European to happen upon heretofore-unknown New World territory or was more required? What rights did claiming territory bestow, and upon whom were they bestowed? How did the Europeans justify their actions against the New World natives and Old World rivals? Did the aspiring imperialists employ the same practices or have different understandings of what constituted fair possession? Both historians and jurists have attempted to answer these questions with various degrees of complexity and success.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid. 4, 11, 52-63,

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. 76.

## CHAPTER I

### THE IMPERIAL LEXICON

In order to claim New World territory, the various European powers had to establish and defend their claims against two potential rivals: the Indians and other Europeans. While the exact processes of claiming New World territory vis-à-vis Old World rivals proved complicated and contentious, the European colonizers had little trouble making and justifying their claims in reference to the inhabitants of the New World. No matter how much they disputed the exact formulae necessary for converting heathen land into European soil, the colonial powers nonetheless agreed that most of the New World constituted *terra nullius* which they had every right to claim. Of course, what the Europeans regarded as *terra nullius* was nothing of the sort. By the time of European arrival, North America (excluding Mesoamerica) was home to 2.5-4 million Indians. Powhatan's paramount chiefdom alone consisted, according to Christian Feest's estimation, of 14,000 to 21,000 inhabitants from the Great Dismal Swamp to the Potomac River. What, then, precluded Indians from holding legitimate legal title to the land? Interestingly enough, the Indians' race or ethnicity—categories as hazy to early-modern Europeans as to modern scholars—did not exclude from them from holding title to, or sovereignty over, their ancestral homelands. Popular wisdom speculated that the natives of America were either the lost tribe of Hebrews or profoundly lost Welshmen, whose skin color had changed due to their environment, and hence were not physiologically

different. Rather the Indians' paganism and incivility, and not their race in the modern sense of the word, disqualified them from holding land, according to the Europeans. English letters patent invariably authorized explorers to claim and take possession only of those lands "not actually possessed of any Christian prince, nor inhabited by Christian people." The implication was that the Indians' idolatry, and resultant incivility, disqualified them from exercising sovereignty over, or holding title to, the land. Not only did Indians revere animals as supernatural beings and worship false idols, they also engaged in behavior particularly objectionable to early modern Protestants, such as dressing skimpily, acting lasciviously, and decorating themselves ostentatiously.<sup>6</sup>

Hakluyt found biblical precedent for such an argument. After all, "*one kingdome is translated from another for the sinnes of the Inhabitanes of the same, and that God in his iustice would surely bringe somme nation or other vpon them to take vengeance of their synnes and wickedness.*" Just as Jehovah had allowed his chosen people, the Hebrews, to conquer the Canaanites because of the latter's heathenism, and the Babylonians to subdue and exile the Israelites because of their infidelity, God had granted Christian Europeans the right, indeed the responsibility, to evict the idolatrous savages from the New World. Yet Christian monarchs had not only the right to appropriate land from heathens, they had a responsibility to do so in hopes that they might convert the

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<sup>6</sup> Keller, Lissitzyn, and Mann, *Creation of Sovereignty Rights*; Christian Feest "Virginia Algonquians," in *Handbook of North American Indians*, ed., William Sturtevant, vol. 15 (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1978), 253-270; James Axtell, *Natives and Newcomers: The Cultural Origins of North America*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 35; Letters Patent to Raleigh in *New American World*, ed. Quinn, vol.3, 267; For a discussion of the estimates, methodologies, and debate over the pre-Columbian population of North America, see Suzanne Austin Alchon, *A Pest in the Land: New World Epidemics in a Global Perspective*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2003), 150-160 .

natives' souls and manners to Christianity. Indeed, Hakluyt lists "*th[e] inlargement of the gospel of Christe*" as the "*principall and chefe*" objective of any plantation.<sup>7</sup>

Unlike Hakluyt, William Strachey, colonial Virginia's first secretary, admitted that the appropriation of Indian land violated the "perpetuall Rule of Iustice, *suum cuique tribuere*"—that everyone, including Indians, deserved to possess their own property—and hence was immoral. Yet, Strachey noted that "we doe (as true Christians) know, that the world never was, nor must be only and alone governed by morality." It would be a greater injustice for Englishmen to allow the benighted and godless idolaters to persist in their ignorance than to commit the comparatively benign injustice of seizing their land. After all, Strachey asked "doe we not goe in a busines [the conversion of the Indians], that must result greater effectes, and strive within vs, beyond the powers and prescriptions of Moraltie?"<sup>8</sup>

The Indians also forfeited title to the land by failing to use it correctly—that is, using it as the English would. Although most Indians in eastern North America depended on maize, beans, and squash cultivated by the women, they also relied heavily on hunting, fishing, and gathering a wide range of foods. Horticulture, for example, supplied merely a quarter of the Powhatans' diet in the Chesapeake, the rest coming from hunting in carefully maintained forest ecosystems and from fishing in the area's rivers and creeks. Yet the English recognized only land that had been "improved," by erecting buildings or clearing fields, as legitimately possessed. As John Locke, political theorist and secretary to one of Carolina's Lords Proprietors, argued at the end of the seventeenth century, an individual can gain title to property only by mixing their labor with it, and

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<sup>7</sup> Hakluyt, *Discourse of Western Planting*, 4, 8, 99-100.

<sup>8</sup> Strachey, *Historie of Travell into Virginia Britania*, eds. Louis B. Wright and Virginia Freund (London: Hakluyt Society, 1953), 16-17.

thereby “improving” it. Only by clearing a forested land, enclosing it with a fence, and planting crops in it, therefore, could a farmer gain possession to property. Accordingly, the carefully managed forests upon which the Indians relied were *terra nullius* that did not actually belong to them, and hence could be legitimately possessed by Englishmen, because the natives failed to “improve” it. This implies, of course, that the Indians had *some* rights to the land, but that such rights were limited.<sup>9</sup>

With Indian claims to territory neatly dispatched, early-modern expansionists sought to ensure their claims in the face of their Old World rivals. Yet just how one should go about claiming land, however, was far from clear, and early-modern jurists scrambled to develop piece-meal policies from domestic law and Roman precedents. The ambiguity shrouding the processes by which Old World explorers claimed New World territory has engendered a contentious historiography reaching back even to the eighteenth century when jurists such as Chief Justice John Marshall had sought to understand these processes in order to explain the United States’ legal foundation. Yet such earlier attempts to explain the issue, hampered in part by limited access to materials, pale in comparison to the more complete and sophisticated account that Arthur Keller, Oliver Lissitzyn, and Frederick Mann, a group of legal scholars at Columbia University, offered in their *Creation of Rights through Symbolic Acts, 1400-1800*, published in 1938.

Based on the early-modern monarchs’ instructions to explorers, those explorers’ accounts of their explorations, and diplomatic discussions, Keller, Lissitzyn, and Mann rejected Chief Justice Marshall’s and others’ claim that mere original visual apprehension

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<sup>9</sup> William Cronon *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1083) 69-79; Fleet “Virginia Algonquians,” in *Handbook* Sturtevant, 258; John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, Ed. Peter Laslett. *Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought*, ed. Raymond Geuss, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988) 285-302.

sufficed to secure a property claim. Instead, the authors suggested, each imperialist power required its explorers to perform specific “symbolic acts of possession” by which they signaled to the local inhabitants and their European competitors that the land now belonged to the monarch whom they represented. Landmarks such as crosses and pillars erected in plain sight of the coast testified that a Christian prince had claimed the territory. Such ceremonies of possession, the authors concluded, varied in the particulars—the Spanish and English tended to be more formal than the French or Portuguese for example—but these diverse practices nonetheless meant the same thing to the Europeans and shared the same “ultimate legal effect.” The authors emphasize that such ceremonies were “wholly sufficient *per se*” to secure title and that other actions like ““effective occupation”” were immaterial to acquiring territory. Thus, imperialists ranging geographically from Portugal to Russia and temporally from the fifteen to the eighteenth centuries enacted symbolic acts that, while differing in their particular manifestation, functioned essentially the same and shared the same purpose. These practices composed, according to the authors, a *lingua franca* or international law, mutually understood and accepted by all who sought to secure New World territory.<sup>10</sup>

The authors forcefully demonstrated that no early-modern monarch claimed title to New World land on the grounds of mere original “discovery or ‘visual apprehension’”—that their servants were the first Christians to discover the land. Rather, on the basis of extensive documentation of period evidence the authors showed that each nation understood some sort of symbolic act as necessary for securing New World

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<sup>10</sup> Arthur S. Keller, Oliver J. Lissitzyn, and Frederick J. Mann, *Creation of Rights of Sovereignty through Symbolic Acts, 1400-1800* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1938), 3, 148-51; John T. Juricek, “English Territorial Claims in North America under Elizabeth and the Early Stuarts,” *Terra Incognitae*, VII (1976), 7-22.



territory, although these acts varied in complexity and form. Despite this apparent uniformity of practice, however, the authors' assertion that these acts had the same "ultimate legal effect"—namely, that they were "wholly sufficient *per se*" for establishing territorial rights—requires examination. The authors implicitly suggested that the practices of early-modern colonizers were in effect homogenous; for all their superficial diversity, all of the symbolic acts of possession enacted by the European powers functioned in the same way legally and politically and meant essentially the same thing to the nations employing them. The term "international law," after all, implies a uniformity and a multilaterally agreed upon standard for what rights or prerogatives the symbolic acts of possession bestowed upon the claiming monarch.<sup>11</sup>

Yet the evidence does not support such a homogenous portrayal. Although every early-modern metropolis demanded symbolic acts of possession, not every kingdom understood these acts to mean the same thing or have the same ultimate effect. If, as the authors suggested, the symbolic acts performed by each nation functioned in the same way and every aspiring empire understood the rules of the game, then territorial disputes between rival powers would hinge upon questions simply of fact—whether or not the claimant had performed the requisite agreed upon activities, or how much territory a single legitimate act secured for a monarch. But these disputes often involved far more fundamental questions regarding what ultimately sufficed in annexing New World territory to the crowns of Europe. For example, when Portugal complained to England's Queen Elizabeth in 1562 that English merchants were trespassing in parts of the African coast claimed for the Portuguese monarchy and trading with the Africans, Elizabeth responded by issuing orders that English ships avoid only those areas where the

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<sup>11</sup> Keller, Lissitzyn, and Mann, *Creation of Sovereignty through Symbolic Acts*, 6, 148-150.

Portuguese maintained fortified *feitorias* or received tribute from African groups. The Queen insisted, much to the Portuguese court's chagrin, that Portuguese territorial rights only existed in those areas where the Iberians maintained an actual presence and not those where they had presumably only performed acts of possession.<sup>12</sup> That such a serious and fundamental dispute over what was necessary to claim distant territory arose at all undermines the authors' contention that "international law" governed the race for New World territory or that symbolic acts had the same legal implications to all the emerging empires. The Queen's position that symbolic acts alone did not suffice to establish territorial possession and that actual occupation was necessary, moreover, directly contradicts the authors' assertion that symbolic acts were "wholly sufficient" in themselves to create possession "and did not require to be supplemented by... 'effective occupation'" or other activities. Symbolic acts may have been *necessary*, but were by no means *sufficient* for creating dominion over New World territory. The process of claiming New World territory, then, did not obey the uniform dictates of a multilaterally accepted "international law," a concept that, as John T. Juricek observes, did not emerge until the late seventeenth century and that the authors use anachronistically.<sup>13</sup>

In *Ceremonies of Possession*, Patricia Seed avoids the errors that plagued Keller and his co-writers.<sup>14</sup> Far from sharing a lingua franca, Seed contends, each aspiring metropolis developed a separate mode of securing territory based on very local medieval

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<sup>12</sup> Public Record Office, "The King of Portugal's Claim to the Guinea Trade," 20 May 1562, *Calendar of State Papers, Foreign Series, of the Reign of Elizabeth [I]* (1562) (London, 1867), no. 78; Ibid., "Replication of the Ambassador of Portugal," 7 June 1562, no. 158; Ibid., "Answer to the Portuguese Ambassador," 15 June 1562, no. 190; Ibid., "Second Replication of the Portuguese Ambassador," 19 June 1562, no. 222. For a fuller discussion of this dispute, see page 25 below.

<sup>13</sup> Keller, Lissitzyn, and Mann, *Creation of Sovereignty through Symbolic Acts*, 148-9; John T. Juricek, "English Claims in North America to 1660: A Study in Legal and Constitutional History." (PhD. diss. University of Chicago, Department of History, June 1970), 17-18, 40-41, 111.

<sup>14</sup> Seed does not specifically engage, nor does she cite, Keller, Lissitzyn, and Mann.

practices. Citing the considerable differences among the various Europeans in language, customs, and law, Seed claims that no monolithic “Europe” nor representative “European” existed in the early modern period, and, accordingly, that the symbolic acts of possession were not only different among the various countries, they were also mutually unintelligible. The respective powers could not understand why their rivals insisted upon using inadequate ceremonies and charged each other with breaking the apparently self-evident rules of claiming. According to Seed, the preferred method of territorial appropriation for Castilian and Aragonese monarchs was the *Requerimiento*—a synopsis of the Christian faith and church history that would-be *conquistadores* and sailors were required to proclaim before commencing with the conquest. Seed traces the origins of the *Requerimiento* to medieval Moorish ultimatums which, like the *Requerimiento*, offered the enemy the opportunity either to surrender and convert, or resist and die.

The English method of securing territory could not have been more divergent from the Spanish practice. Drawing on their feudal agricultural traditions, the English ceremonies of possession resembled the symbolic transfer of manorial land by exchange of the turf and twig ritual, wherein the previous owner symbolized the property as a whole, and planted gardens and erected fences to demonstrate possession. Likewise, the French indulged their predilection toward pomp and ceremony by organizing extensive processions to symbolize possession, the cartographically-inclined Dutch produced maps, and the scientific-minded Portuguese recorded their astronomical observations. Because each people conceived creation of territorial rights based on traditions peculiar to their culture and history, these practices were mutually unintelligible to all of the other

peoples. Having never faced invasion from the Moors nor heard their ultimatums, the English could not understand why the Spanish repeated the *Requerimiento* before each conquest, nor what weight that practice carried. Indeed, the various European powers could not even understand that there might have been other ways of claiming territory, and interpreted such actions as disingenuous and contemptuous.<sup>15</sup>

If Seed is correct and the experience of the individual European powers was truly different, we should be able to identify the nationality of the explorer in question simply by observing how he signified possession. In 1579, a noted adventurer landed on a heretofore-unexplored New World coast and encountered curious Indians. After an elaborate ceremony in which the Indian headman appeared to acknowledge his vassalage and surrender his country, the explorer had a brass plaque bearing his sovereign's arms and a coin affixed to a wooden pillar. Using Seed's criteria, we would (falsely) conclude that the adventurer was French; after all, the ceremonies possessed all the characteristically French elements including the Indians' consent and procession culminating in the erecting of a sign of possession. Yet Sir Francis Drake, the explorer in question, was not, by any means, French. Seed boldly asserts that the English were patently "anticeremonial," that their ceremonies tended to dispense with the formal rituals such as erecting crosses and enacting prescribed rituals. As Drake's account demonstrates, however, the English were by no means universally anticeremonial.<sup>16</sup>

Conversely, Jacques Cartier's ceremonial appropriation of the Gaspé Peninsula for King Francis I of France demonstrates that while the Englishman Drake performed a

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<sup>15</sup> Patricia Seed, *Ceremonies of Possession in Europe's Conquest of the New World, 1492-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 2-3, 7-15, 31, 42, 66, 70, 133, 153.

<sup>16</sup> Richard Hakluyt, "The Famous Voyage" in David Quinn, ed., *New American World* vols. (New York: Arno Press, 1979), 1:445-6; Seed, *Ceremonies of Possession*, 13, 16.

“French” act of possession, the Frenchman Jacques Cartier enacted a ceremony that bore little resemblance to what Seed would label quintessentially French practice. Seeing on his first voyage to Canada that no Christian prince occupied the land and finding no evidence that it had already been appropriated, Cartier claimed the land for his sovereign. Without a shadow of consent from the local Indians, the captain and his men placed a cross on the bank, held a worship service, and departed from their ship, pursued by the indignant headman. We see no attempt to secure the Indians’ consent, no procession celebrating the alliance of the natives and newcomers, only a hastily erected cross, a quick Mass, and an escape.<sup>17</sup>

Were these the sole exceptions to Seed’s model, her argument might have some merit. Yet there are many contradictory examples and exceptions. In her opening example of the chapter on English claims, for example, she cites the Separatist Puritans’ lackluster arrival at Plymouth as evidence of the English disregard for ceremony and tendency to secure territorial claims by reproducing English agricultural and domestic symbols, by building houses, clearing gardens, and erecting fences. Yet in doing so Seed ignores a very good non-political reason why the Puritans erected houses and plowed gardens; they needed shelter and sustenance. Of course they reproduced the domestic structures of England, but they did so not to demonstrate their possession of the land so much as to survive. Besides, the example is drawn from 1620, a century and a half after John Cabot allegedly claimed North America for England, and more than a decade after the establishment of Jamestown. The experience of the Puritans is hardly representative of ceremonial acts pursued by other Englishmen, nor is it entirely clear that it was an act

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<sup>17</sup> Jacques Cartier, “Jacques Cartier’s First Account of the New Land, Called New France, Discovered inn the Year 1534,” in *The Voyages of Jacques Cartier*, ed. Ramsey Cook, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 26-7.

of possession. Seed further notes that upon arriving in Jamestown, George Percy “described the English occupation of Jamestown in...mundane terms,” noting merely that they arrived and began working. Yet she completely ignores the incident Percy recorded just days earlier when the Jamestown settlers “set up a Crosse at Chesupioc Bay” at Cape Henry, and the subsequent farcical ceremony wherein Christopher Newport and John Smith attempted to subordinate Powhatan. That Seed would disregard these events, which occurred within such a short span of time is disturbing. Furthermore, Columbus’s ceremony of appropriation in Guanahani, upon which later claims to all the Americas were often based, did not recite the *Requerimiento* because the document had not been written and would not for three decades. If Keller, Lissitzyn and Mann exaggerated the homogeneity of the European claiming practices, Seed overestimates the profound disparities of those ceremonies. Seed is highly selective in her description of claiming practices, a selectivity that borders on intellectual dishonesty.<sup>18</sup>

Seed’s underlying premise that the disparate people of Europe differed significantly during the early modern period is likewise suspicious. Arguing that Europe did not represent a monolithic or homogenous unity by the early modern period, Seed suggests that deeply rooted legal and linguistic practices made the intentions and policies of neighboring kingdoms incomprehensible. So ignorant of other Europeans’ expectations and culture, and so adamant that their country possessed the only legitimate laws and policies were early modern Europeans, that they could not understand each

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<sup>18</sup> Seed, *Ceremonies of Possession*, 16-7, 70; George Percy, “Observations by Master George Percy, 1607,” in *Narratives of Early Virginia, 1606-1625*. ed. Lyon Gardiner Tyler, Original Narratives of Early American History, ed. J. Franklin Jameson, 1-23. (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1907), 11; John Pory “Proceedings of the Virginia Assembly, 1619,” in *Narratives of Early Virginia*, ed. Tyler, 155.

other's cultural practices. Perhaps this is true of the peasantry, but the peasantry had precious little to do with claiming New World territory.

For the lawyers and statesmen who prescribed and interpreted the ceremonial acts of possession, however, such discontinuities meant less. Schooled in the same Greco-Roman mythology, culture, and law, interpreting the world according to the same Aristotelian ethics and cosmology, sharing similar prerogative of caste and privilege, and, at least until the Reformation, attending the same Mass of the same Catholic Church under the guidance of the same Holy Father, the aristocratic policy-makers shared more with their foreign counterparts than did the peasants with their counterparts. Moreover, many of these individuals were far from ignorant about the language, culture, and sensibilities of their European neighbors. Richard Hakluyt, perhaps the greatest anthologist of materials relating to ceremonies of possession, produced much of his work while in Paris serving as chaplain to the English ambassador to France. To suggest that obstacles in language and obscure medieval practices prevented these individuals from understanding each other's attempts to claim New World territory and to justify those claims ignores the fundamental connections and shared traditions among Europeans, especially educated ones. Claiming otherwise ghettoizes Europe into mutually unintelligible and alien units.<sup>19</sup>

If Keller, Lissitzyn and Mann exaggerate the homogeneity of the symbolic acts of possession, and Seed exaggerates the variations of claiming practices among the various kingdoms, how, ultimately did kingdoms claim land? John T. Juricek, writing after the Columbia scholars but before Seed, plots a middle course between the opposing models. Juricek argues that, although all the colonial powers did share a lingua franca, they

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<sup>19</sup> Seed, *Ceremonies of Possession*, 7-15.

usually adhered to one of two models of “legal code” of territorial appropriation; the “preemptive” and “dominative” models.<sup>20</sup> Engineered by, and naturally prejudicial toward, the Iberian countries, the preemptive code allowed imperial kingdoms to secure title over large territories very quickly and with minimal investment. Accordingly, the Spanish claimed that by planting the flags, making the appropriate statements, and doing so in the presence of reliable witnesses, Columbus secured title not only over Guanahani but over the entire Western Hemisphere. Such preemptive acts, of course, inherently favored the early comers to New World exploration, like the Spanish, who could “preempt” would-be imperialist rivals before they could claim territory for themselves. In order to controvert Spanish preemptive claims, Juricek argues, England and other northern European states designed a claiming system better suited to their status as latecomers to American exploration. According to the “dominative legal system,” a kingdom like Spain could not secure title to a place by merely discovering it, mumbling the *Requerimiento* to an abandoned beach, and setting up a cross. Rather the claiming country also had to effectively occupy and settle the land before they could take possession of it. Columbus, then, could only claim to have conquered Guanahani if he discovered it, performed the appropriate acts, *and* then left a garrison to occupy it. Granted, prior discovery of an area and acts of possession were not superfluous to establishing a claim, but they were not solely sufficient to do so, according to the English.<sup>21</sup>

The English did not always, however, embrace the dominative legal code in pursuing their North American empire, according to Juricek. Indeed, English practice

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<sup>20</sup> In his dissertation, Juricek uses the terms “permissive” and “demanding” instead of preemptive and dominative which are found in his article in *Terra Incognitae*, “English Territorial Claims.”

<sup>21</sup> Juricek, “English Claims in North America to 1660,” ; Juricek, “English Territorial Claims,” 7-10.



shifted between the dominative and preemptive poles in the two centuries following 1492. As Henry VII's 1496 letters patent to Venetian captain John Cabot and his son Sebastian demonstrate, the English initially ascribed to something very much like the preemptive code. These documents authorized the Cabots to seek out and militarily conquer (if necessary) non-Christian lands "on the outskirts of the Orient," just as Isabella and Ferdinand had granted Columbus authority to conquer lands. By Elizabeth I's reign, however, the Spanish and Portuguese had, through their energetic activity, claimed large tracts of New World territory. Accordingly, the Elizabethans reacted by demanding that a would-be metropolis "actually" possess lands by peopling and defending it from all challengers, native or European. The early Stuarts, having finally secured a permanent if still tenuous colony in the Chesapeake and espousing an antiquated notion of monarchical prerogative, asserted as had Henry VII and the earlier Iberians that the English sailors acting as agents of the crown could establish preemptive rights without needing to actually people the territory in question.<sup>22</sup>

That the English could espouse such substantially different positions on what constituted fair possession in the space of two centuries contradicts Seed's claims that claiming policies derived from deeply rooted, atavistic, and incomprehensible medieval traditions. Rather contingent and historically situated realities dictated the approach taken by the respective powers. Had Christopher Columbus claimed Hispanola for Henry VII instead of Ferdinand and Isabella, England might have adhered to a much more rigorous version of the preemptive legal model. Not entrenched medieval traditions but early modern political exigencies dictated the policies chosen and how those policies were interpreted. Flexibility, not medieval tradition, was the rule. The English monarchs

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<sup>22</sup> Juricek, "English Claims in North America to 1660," 337, 373, 381, 410-2, 464, 471.

and their advisors responded to the demands of the time in accord with their colonial aspirations. While Juricek does not label the European powers as Machiavellian opportunists who changed their arguments to fit the situation, he nonetheless portrays the early-modern statesmen as acutely aware of political shifts and willing to alter claiming practices without compunction. Juricek also allows for diversity and change over time *within* the experiences of each aspiring empire, where Seed's model insists on the essential fixedness of claiming territory.

Accordingly, Juricek's model resounds more with the evidence so problematic for Seed and the Columbia scholars. Juricek appreciates both the continuities and variety in the various claiming practices and traces their roots to significantly more convincing circumstances. That is not to say, of course, that Juricek's model has no errors. In presenting his two codes as monolithic, definite, and incompatible, Juricek neglects the fact that, although different European powers might invest different acts with different authority and interpret them in slightly different ways, they nonetheless utilized essentially the same practices and symbols to establish territorial rights in the New World. The apparent discrepancies, then, appear to be matters of emphasis rather than fundamental disagreement. If there was no lingua franca regarding the appropriation of New World territory, there were a limited number of mutually comprehensible dialects. The European powers had at their disposal a shared lexicon of methods by which they could secured title to land and defend that title from contenders. Although they emphasized different elements of that lexicon and invested different weight in different practices, the practices themselves were neither unique to any particular country nor were they mutually incomprehensible to the contending princes. This vocabulary included a

number of elements, including written authorization, symbolic acts, markers of territory, actual occupation, and cartographic expressions of the claimed territory.

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Most America-bound explorers left European ports with written authorization to claim New World territory for their respective sovereigns. Soon after Columbus's first voyage, Pope Alexander VI, for example, issued a Bull of Donation in which he granted the Spanish the exclusive right to convert pagans in the New World, while the Portuguese had the privilege of redeeming Africa from sin and heathenism, threatening excommunication to any prince who interfered in either Iberian power's sphere of influence. The Spanish later adapted the pope's bull into the *Requerimiento*, which each explorer was to read before annexing land to the Spanish empire. The English answered the papal donation by issuing letters patent. Although these documents substituted the English monarch's authority for that of the pontiff, they showed remarkable similarity to the papal bulls. Written in Latin, the letters patent mimicked their papal counterparts by using the same type of parchment and copying its formal structure and script style. Even the wording used in the letters patent parroted that used in the bulls, suggesting that the English quite seriously intended to communicate in the same legal language as the Catholic Spanish and Portuguese.<sup>23</sup>

Like the papal bulls, the letters patent authorized explorers to claim land in the name of their homeland. Henry VII's 1564 letters patent to Venetian explorer John Cabot and his sons gives them "license to set up our banners and ensigns" in any newly claimed area and to "subdue, occupie, and possesse, as our vassales and lieutenants,

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<sup>23</sup> Patricia Seed "Taking Possession and Reading Texts: Establishing the Authority of Overseas Empires," *William & Mary Quarterly*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ser., 49 (April 1992), 185-89. 200-1; Letters Patent to Walter Raleigh, March 25, 1584, in *New American World*, ed. David B. Quinn, 3:267.

getting vnto vs the rule, title, and iurisdiction.” Likewise, Henry’s granddaughter, Elizabeth I, granted Sir Walter Raleigh “all the soyle of all such landes” that Raleigh’s deputies could discover and claim within six years of the issue of the letters patent.

Under what authority could monarchies authorize such adventurers?

Queen Elizabeth’s “especial grace, certaine science & mere motion” entitled her to grant half brothers, Humphrey Gilbert and Walter Raleigh, the privilege to claim land and plant colonies in the New World, for example. By invoking her “especial grace,” Patricia Seed suggests, the queen was appealing to her God-given authority to rule in accordance with the medieval doctrine of the divine right of kings. Her “certaine science”—personal knowledge—and “mere motion”—her prerogative to do as she pleased—further qualified her to grant authority to her deputies.<sup>24</sup>

Commonplace as they were, however, these documents were neither wholly sufficient nor always necessary to establish claims of sovereignty. Not surprisingly, Protestant England put little stock in the pope’s division of the New World. Hakluyt alleged that Pope Alexander VI, “a Spaniard-born,” had favored his homeland with the donation to the detriment of other countries, and clearly exceeded his ecclesiastical authority. Even Catholic France, however, ignored the pontiff’s threat of excommunication and sent explorers to the New World. Nor were Elizabeth’s letters patent sufficient to claim title, for they only authorized explorers to find such territories, instead of granting land themselves. Unless the grantees found and claimed land, the letters patent were worthless. An explorer, furthermore, could claim land for his monarch even without explicit authority to do so. Sir Francis Drake, on his circumnavigation of

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<sup>24</sup> Letters Patent to John Cabot in Richard Hakluyt, *Divers Voyages Touching the Discoverie of America* (London: Thomas Woodcock, 1582), 15-16; Letters Patent to Sir Walter Raleigh in *New American World* ed. Quinn vol. 3: 267-8; Seed, “Taking Possession,” 187.

the world, claimed a number of places for his queen, even though she had not commissioned him to do so.<sup>25</sup>

Armed with such a writ from Ferdinand and Isabella, Columbus arrived at an island that the inhabitants called Guanahani in October 1492. Disembarking, the Admiral, in the presence of qualified witnesses, planted a flag bearing the initials of his Spanish sponsors, Ferdinand and Isabella, and made “the declarations that were required.” By merely performing these rituals, Columbus “did take possession of the said island for the king and queen his lords.” All Columbus had to do to establish title over the island was perform some symbolic acts and make “required” declarations, and to do so in the presence of legal witnesses who could verify that he had done so correctly. Columbus’s ceremony exemplifies the formulaic “symbolic acts of possession,” by which explorers claimed newfound territory in their sovereign sponsors’ names. Mere visual apprehension of theretofore-unclaimed (by Europeans) territory did not suffice to claim land. Instead, would-be possessors had to disembark and perform certain rites and rituals before title passed into their sovereign’s hands.

Although these symbolic rituals varied in detail and formality, they showed remarkable continuity among the various empire-builders and over time. As with Columbus on Guanahani, these acts usually consisted of disembarking, performing the appropriate ceremonies, and the erection of an enduring landmark to show rival Europeans that the land was no longer *terra nullius* but now the domain of a Christian monarch. When they explored the coast of Africa, the Portuguese frequently erected stone pillars signifying their possession. French explorer Jacques Cartier erected a cross

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<sup>25</sup> Hakluyt, *Discourse of Western Planting*, 96-111; Juricek, “English Territorial Claims,” 9; Letters Patent to Raleigh in *New American World*, ed. Quinn vol. 3, 267-9; Keller, Lissitzyn, and Mann, *Creation of Sovereignty Rights*, 56.

at the entrance of the Gaspé Harbor, mounting a plaque with *fleurs-de-lis* and the inscription “*Vive Le Roy De France.*” Cartier and his crew then worshiped the cross in the presence of the undoubtedly curious Stadacona Indians.<sup>26</sup>

Like the Spanish and other Europeans, the English consummated their discovery by means of symbolic acts and commemorated them with landmarks. In 1497, the Venetian-born pilot in the employ of England, John Cabot, and his sons discovered the mainland of North America, according to Hakluyt, two years before the Spanish. Cabot evidently “*did more than see the countrie,*” which would not be sufficient to take possession, “*for he wente on lande in diuers places, tooke possession of the same accordinge to his patente*” granted to the explorer by Henry VII. Although Cabot did not leave an account of his acts of possession, a contemporary claimed that the explorer left a cross and flags of England and St. Mark, Venice’s patron saint, somewhere in the Northeast. English expansionists later claimed territory reaching from Florida to the Arctic Circle based on Cabot’s voyage and acts of possession. After allegedly receiving vows of fealty from local California Indians, furthermore, Sir Francis Drake attached a sixpence piece and brass plaque bearing his sovereign’s name and the date of appropriation to a wooden pillar, christening the area *Nova Albion*. Adapting the ancient English “twig and turf” ceremony by which land was symbolically transferred between individuals, Sir Humphrey Gilbert seized a “rod and a turffe” to take possession, both literally and symbolically, of Newfoundland. To show England’s hegemony over the land, Gilbert, like Drake, nailed a lead carving of the king’s arms to a wooden post—an

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<sup>26</sup>Oliver Dunn and James E. Kelley, Jr. trans. *The Diario of Christopher Columbus’s First Voyage to America, 1492-1493: Abstracted by Bartolomé de Las Casas* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989), 63-65; Keller, Lissitzyn and Mann, *Creation of Sovereignty Rights*. 34-38; 148-53; Keller, Lissitzyn, and Mann, *Creation of Sovereignty Rights*, 25-27; Jacques Cartier, “Jacques Cartier’s First Account of...New France,” in *The Voyages of Jacques Cartier*, ed., Ramsay Cook, 26-7.

unambiguous sign to other Europeans. Disembarking on the North Carolina's Outer Banks in 1584, Captains Arthur Barlowe and Phillip Amadas took possession for Elizabeth by performing "the ceremonies used in such enterprises," and George Percy recorded that the Jamestown settlers "set up a Crosse at Chesupioc Bay." Regardless of what form the ceremonies took—from cutting trees to holding mass—the symbolic acts constituted an essential prerequisite to appropriation.<sup>27</sup>

Both the written authorization and the symbolic rites of possession constitute what John Juricek calls the "preemptive legal code" of claiming New World territory. Yet, as Juricek, argues, not all European power saw such preemptive actions as sufficient to create title. Many powers, such as the English, required a further demand—actual occupation or domination—before they recognized territorial claims.

In 1562, the Portuguese ambassador in London complained to Elizabeth that English merchant ships were frequenting Guinea, an area claimed by the Portuguese, and trading illegally with the local tribes and kingdoms. The queen's response reveals the English allegiance to the dominative code of possession. While the queen would restrain English traders "from haunting any new found land in Ethiopia, wherein the King of Portugal had obedience, dominion, and tribe," she would not, and was not obliged to, keep them from trading in places that Portugal had discovered but "whereof he [the King of Portugal] had no superiority at all." Only those parts of the African coast where the Portuguese constructed and garrisoned *feitorias*, and not those places merely discovered

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<sup>27</sup> Keller, Lissitzyn, and Mann *Creation of Sovereignty Rights*, 25, 49, 51, 52, 57n, 59; Hakluyt, *Discourse in Western Planting*, 92; Arthur Barlowe, "Arthur Barlowe's Narrative of the 1584 Voyage," in *The First Colonists: Documents on the Planting of the First English Settlements in North America, 1584-1590*, eds. David B. Quinn and Alison M. Quinn (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1982.) 2; George Percy "Observations by Master George Percy, 1607," in *Narratives of Early Virginia, 1606-1625*. ed. Lyon Gardiner Tyler, 11.

by Portuguese pilots, belonged to the Portuguese, and only here could they expect to exclude Englishmen from trading.<sup>28</sup>

The English also derived their right to North America, in part, from effective occupation and domination of the continent by Britons. According to “*very auncient and authentical*” manuscripts, a Welsh prince named Maddock ap Owen Guyeth, tired of the internecine civil wars in his homeland, twice ventured across the Atlantic, where he “*discovered and planted large Countries,*” presumably in North America. Indeed, the earliest explorers noted that North American Indians kept “Crosses in their Chappells...which they do honour” and spoke a language similar to Welsh, suggesting that they were of British origin. If the Indians truly were transplanted Welshmen, then the British could claim North America “not only by our simple discoveryies, but by our planting, and Inhabiting them with the People of our own Nation 400. yeares before Columbus.” The English therefore had prior discovery *and* effective occupation of North America long before the Spanish. No matter how apocryphal, the myth of Madoc demonstrated the English belief that mere discovery and symbolic acts did not establish true sovereignty.<sup>29</sup>

Richard Grenville displayed his acceptance of the dominative code when he found that the first English colony at Roanoke had been abandoned in 1586. In the previous year, Grenville had left 107 soldiers under the authority of Ralph Lane on Roanoke, promising to return quickly with supplies. Delayed in his return, Grenville arrived a

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<sup>28</sup> Public Record Office, “The King of Portugal’s Claim to the Guinea Trade,” 20 May 1562, *Calendar of State Papers, Foreign Series, of the Reign of Elizabeth [I]* (1562) (London, 1867), no. 78; Ibid., “Replication of the Ambassador of Portugal,” 7 June 1562, no. 158; Ibid., “Answer to the Portuguese Ambassador,” 15 June 1562, no. 190; Ibid., “Second Replication of the Portuguese Ambassador,” 19 June 1562, no. 222.

<sup>29</sup> Hakluyt *Discourse of Western Planting*, 88; William Strachey, *Historie of Travell into Virginia Britania*, 11-12.



month after Lane had evacuated the settlement and returned to England with Sir Francis Drake. Hakluyt explained that Grenville, unable to find Lane and the other colonists and “finding the place which they [Lane and his colonists] inhabited desolate, yet unwilling to loose possession of the Countrie, which Englishmen had so long held: after good deliberation he determined to leave some men behinde to retaine possession of the Country.” In the event, the Roanoke Indians, whom Ralph Lane had sufficiently alienated, quickly dispatched some of the unlucky settlers and chased others away from the island. What is significant, however, is that Grenville and (Hakluyt, who wrote the report) feared that the English would “loose possession” of, and their right to, Virginia if there were not at least some Englishmen to literally hold the fort.<sup>30</sup>

Juricek also notes that the acquiescence of local Indians to colonial powers reinforced those nations’ claims of effective occupation and sovereignty. When Sir Francis Drake stayed in California for a month during the summer of 1579, the local Indians beseeched the explorer to “take their province into his hand, and become their king,” vowing to “resigne unto him their right and title of the whole land and become his subjects.” At least this was Drake’s interpretation of the proceedings. Across the continent in 1586, an Indian chief allegedly acknowledged his vassalage to the “great Weroanza of England,” Elizabeth I. In the Chesapeake, the Iroquoian Susquehannocks caressed John Smith with “their ceremonious hands about his necke,” and desired him to be their leader, while the Chickahominies consented to “bee true subjects to King James

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<sup>30</sup> Richard Hakluyt “Narrative of the 1586 Virginia Voyages,” in *The First Colonists*, eds. Quinn and Quinn, 86.

and his Deputies.” Apparent Indian subservience and submission reinforced English claims to have dominated, and hence legitimately possessed, the land.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Juricek, “English Territorial Claims,” 10; Sir Francis Drake “The Famous Voyage” in *New American World*, ed. Quinn, 1:466, Ralph Lane, “Ralph Lane’s Narrative of the Settlement of Roanoke Island,” in *The First Colonists*, ed. Quinn, 36-8; John Pory “Proceedings of the Virginia Assembly, 1619,” in *Narratives of Early Virginia*, ed. Tyler, 247-278, 149-50; John Smith *General Historie of Virginia, New-England and the Summer Isles* (London: Michael Sparkes, 1624). 111-5.

## CHAPTER II

### PAPER EMPIRES

Once European imperialists had signaled their claims on the ground, and often before they had, another set of imperialists sought to consolidate these territorial acquisitions in a less direct manner: by mapping them. Even while they were issuing letters patent, performing the requisite symbolic acts, erecting landmarks, and beginning to effectively occupy the land, colonizing nations sought to reinforce and legitimate their claims through maps, the final element in the shared vocabulary of claiming symbols.

On the most prosaic, and perhaps the most important, level, maps facilitated colonial endeavors by conveying vital geographic knowledge. Before traders or colonists could establish a foothold in the New World, they first had to find it and maps provided that navigational aid. Maps guided pilots around the shallow shoals and into deep harbors; they showed traders which rivers could be navigated and how and where their potential customers lived; they helped colonial planners choose sites for settlement where fresh water could be found and where protective forts could be built. Given the potential value of such detailed cartographic knowledge, many of the colonizing countries sought to restrict its diffusion. Geographic information became a state secret which European rivals eagerly sought. As early as the fifteenth century, the Portuguese and Spanish sought strictly to control the availability of geographic and cartographic information. The Spanish jealously guarded their master map, the *Padrón Real*, lest their rivals

become too familiar with Spain's American territory and gravely threatened loose-tongued pilots.<sup>32</sup>

At the same time the Spanish vigilantly guarded their own sensitive cartographic secrets, they sought to undermine their rivals by mapping—or at least gathering topographic data on—their rivals' New World holdings. In 1611, the English at Jamestown captured and detained three Spanish spies including Don Diego de Molina. In his letter to the emperor, sewn into the sole of a shoe to escape English detection, de Molina included a brief “description of this country” including the depth and dimension of the Chesapeake, as well as the location and troop strength of the English forts guarding the struggling colony. Elsewhere de Molina alludes to Spanish Captain Diego Ramirez's description of the colony housed in the Council of the Indies. The English found such cartographic espionage no less inviting. When, in 1682, buccaneer Bartholomew Sharp and his crew faced punishment for preying on Spanish shipping in the Pacific, the pirates managed to assuage England's Charles II by offering him detailed geographic information about the west coast of South America. Charles willingly overlooked illicit Sharp's piracy, which had threatened a precarious Anglo-Spanish truce, because the pirate had captured “a great Book full of Sea-Charts and Maps” from a Spanish vessel. These volumes contained a wealth of topographic, hydrological, and political information which could well serve England if rivalries between the countries flared again. Such a windfall of cartographic information covered a multitude of sins and Sharp managed to turn a piratical spree into a noble act of espionage for his king. In a very practical sense,

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<sup>32</sup> Harley, *New Nature of Maps*, 91-97.

cartographic knowledge served imperialistic needs and colonial countries vigorously guarded their information.<sup>33</sup>

While the European powers sought to suppress geographic information as classified secrets, they ironically also sought to broadcast it as widely as possible. When artfully drawn, engraved by the expert Dutch publishers, and widely distributed throughout Europe, maps served as symbolic claims to land and as propaganda pieces by which European powers hoped to convince their rivals of territorial ownership. Whereas mapmakers traditionally contend that their maps are objective and faithful representations of the territory mapped, cartographic historian J. Brian Harley dismissed the prevailing sentiment of cartographic positivism. Maps are not, Harley argued, “mirrors” held up to the landscape and can be judged as “right”—when they align with reality—or “wrong”—when they fail to do so. Rather, no map, not even those based on geometric projection or modern surveying techniques, is completely value-free or objective. Cartographers do not work and live in a political or social vacuum but are rather enmeshed in society. Accordingly, maps, produced by humans situated in such social and political contexts, necessarily reflect social values in norms, either unintentionally or to further a calculated hidden agenda. Borrowing postmodern terminology, Harley describes maps as “texts” whose true messages and assertions of power lie subtly hidden within the ostensibly objective maps.<sup>34</sup> By careful study, these texts can be deconstructed to reveal their

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<sup>33</sup> Smith, *A Generall Historie of Virginia*, in *Narratives of Early Virginia*, Tyler, ed., 320; Don Diego de Molina, “Letter of Diego de Molina,” in *Narratives of Early Virginia*, ed., Tyler, 219-20, 223-24; Derek Howse and Norman J. W. Thrower, “Introduction” to Basil Ringrose, *A Buccaneer’s Atlas*, Howse and Thrower, eds., (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992): 2-33; W.D. [William Dick] quoted in Howse and Thrower, eds., *A Buccaneer’s Atlas*, p. 2 from John Exquemelin, *Bucaniers of America: Or a True Account of the Most Remarkable Assaults*, (London: William Crooke, [1684]), 80.

<sup>34</sup> Despite his invocation of postmodern thought, Harley’s reading of maps used but did not rely on Foucault and Derrida. In previous essays, Harley argued many of the same conclusions without mention of “texts,” “discourses,” or “deconstruction.” Indeed, Barbara Beylea claims that, regardless of his mention of

encoded messages. For example, Tudor cartographers, believing in a Great Chain of Being and eager to flatter their aristocratic patrons, celebrated and reinforced the hierarchical English social structure by including aristocratic arms on, and excluding the humble peasant dwellings from, maps of the English counties.<sup>35</sup>

In the hands of colonizing powers, maps became “weapons of imperialism” as potent as “guns and warship,” according to Harley. Imperial maps could be designed to communicate imperialistic messages and convey legitimacy and truth. By arranging not only cartographic information but also the “ornamental” cartouches and drawings, cartographers could subtly, and perhaps even unintentionally, suggest that England enjoyed legitimate title to the land. Far from ornamentation or “garnishing” of the cartographic landscape, indeed, cartouches were integral and inseparable from the overall “meaning” of the map, as were place names and even omissions from the maps. Unlike “guns and warships,” of course, maps could not actively dispossess natives nor defend colonies. Yet they could serve as psychological and rhetorical tools to discourage European rivals and to persuade wavering Englishmen about England’s claims.<sup>36</sup>

It is not difficult to believe that a cartographer such as John Smith accepted the imperialistic status quo, nor that he had a hidden agenda in his mapmaking. Employed variously by the Virginia and Plymouth Companies, Captain John Smith explored much of the Chesapeake as well as the coast of New England. Smith also presided briefly over the fledgling colony at Jamestown, and, if he and his supporters are to be believed, saved

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postmodernism, Harley retained an essentially “positivistic” understanding of maps. See Barbara Beylea, “Images of Power: Derrida/Foucault/Harley,” *Cartographica*, 29:2 (1992) 1-9.

<sup>35</sup> Harley, *The New Nature of Maps*, 35-37, 98, 456.

<sup>36</sup> G.N.G. Clarke, “Taking Possession: The Cartouche as Cultural Text in Eighteenth-Century American Maps,” in *Word and Image*, 4(2) (April-June 1988), 455-60, 72; Hakluyt, *Discourse in Western Planting*, 4; Harley, *The New Nature of Maps*, 35, 73-5.

the settlement by trading for corn with the Powhatans. After he returned to England, he tirelessly promoted the New World colonies (and himself) in print. In the preface to his *General History of Virginia*, Smith explicitly condoned the English claims to sovereignty when he observed that, in Virginia, James I “hath place and opportunity to enlarge his ancient Dominion without wronging any.”

Like Smith, John White, creator of the earliest English maps of Virginia, had a personal investment in the New World plantations. Serving as naturalist to Ralph Lane’s colony at Roanoke in 1585-86 and in 1587, for a few days at least, as governor of the ill-fated third colony planted at Roanoke, White surely accepted the imperialist status quo. Virginia Farrer, a woman cartographer of a fanciful 1650 map of Virginia, included the map in a book that advocated the establishment of the silk industry in New World colonies. These outspoken advocates of American colonization, therefore, accepted England’s claims to ownership of parts of North America.<sup>37</sup>

Both in their content and their presentation, cartographers could craft imperial messages. Most obviously, maps could create the impression of proprietary rights by doing what all maps, by definition, do: portraying geographic information. By portraying specific geographic knowledge, cartographers demonstrated an extensive familiarity with the mapped area. Such familiarity, in turn, testified to the actual presence of explorers in the area and, by extension, the investment which a colonizing country—or at least stockholders—had devoted to the enterprise. Mapping, in other words, suggested a strong affiliation to the piece of New World real estate portrayed in the map. By gathering specific information about the geography of an area, explorers and their partner

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<sup>37</sup> Coolie Verner, “The First Maps of Virginia, 1590-1673,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 58 (1950): 3-15.

cartographers could later prove their presence in an area. By publishing this information, they could register these discoveries in the European presses, much like an inventor who officially documents his new design with a patent. Non-geographic knowledge of an area could also validate an explorer's claim to having visited and spent time in a region. Specific details about the flora and fauna, as well as specific information about the region's natives could testify to a special knowledge of an area, knowledge only possible through the kinds of extensive contact required to establish title over land. When Columbus noted the suitability of harbors and size of mountains, in other words, he was doing more than simply gauging sites for future trade factories: he was also demonstrating that he had in fact been there, and that he had been there first. Columbus recorded knowledge that could only be available to those who had actually visited the New World and spent some time there. Maps, then, could demonstrate that the other requirements of the claiming lexicon had been satisfied by the aspiring colonizers. As Harley notes, "To own the maps was to own the land."<sup>38</sup>

Precise geographic information, incorporated into maps, also testified forcefully to the natives' consent, or at least perceived consent, to European colonization, which gave credence to European claims of ownership (see page 27 above). Although few native American cultures outside of the Andes or Mesoamerica created enduring graphic representations of geography, indigenous Americans nonetheless carried "mental maps" by which they could navigate their ecological and political worlds.<sup>39</sup> In large part, these

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<sup>38</sup> Harley, *The New Nature of Maps*, 35, 73-5.

<sup>39</sup> For Mesoamerican and Andean cartographic representations, see Barbara E. Mundy, "Mesoamerican Cartography," in *The History of Cartography*, Vol. 2 *Cartography in the Traditional African, American, Arctic, Australian, and Pacific Societies*, David Woodward, and G. Malcom Lewis, eds. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); and Walter Mignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality, & Colonization*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), 226-243.



mental maps relied upon descriptive toponyms assigned to geographic features. Indians in southern New England, for example, might name a rich clam bed for the food found there or an open forest for its abundance of deer thereby creating an oral map which rendered western-style cartography unnecessary.

Yet if natives had no need for permanent maps, they nonetheless demonstrated an ability to create ephemeral representations of their mental maps. When John Smith pressed Powhatan to show him the way to the western sea, the “subtile Salvage” insisted that the reports of “any salt water beyond the mountaines...are false,” and “began to draw plots upon the ground...of all those regions.” Jacques Cartier found a similar capacity for cartography among Laurentian Iroquoians who mapped river rapids with “certain little stickes, which they layd upon the ground in a certain distance...representing the *Saults*.” European cartographers readily incorporated this native knowledge into their own maps of the New World. In his map of Virginia, for example, John Smith frankly acknowledges his debt to native informants. Small Maltese Crosses indicate the boundary between the area that “hath bin discovered” by the English and that which the cartographer only knows “by relation” from the natives he encountered in the region. To be sure those parts of the map where Smith had not explored remain impressionistic and vague, but the map nonetheless testifies to the necessity of Indian cooperation with the would-be colonizers. Given the legitimacy that Indian consent conferred on colonial enterprises, the obvious contribution of natives to European maps might have bolstered colonial claims to ownership. At the very least they demonstrated that the Europeans had

been able to stay around an area long enough to map it without being forced away by hostile natives.<sup>40</sup>

Besides including esoteric knowledge of the mapped territory to indicate familiarity with and area and Indian cooperation, imperialistic cartographers could tailor their *presentations* to authenticate English claims in a number of ways; graphically, through cartouches and icons; verbally, through written notes and toponyms; and, ironically, even by leaving parts of the map blank. Perhaps the most effective cartographic element for communicating rhetorical messages was the decorative cartouches and illustrations. Instead of mere superfluous decoration, according to Harley, these drawings enhanced the map's essential message. Cartographers explicitly asserted English sovereignty over the New World, for example, by placing amourial bearings over the landscape. Just as Gilbert and Drake erected wooden pillars bearing the royal arms to broadcast England's claim to the new found lands, English cartographers of the New World explicitly suggested that the English crown had "most right" to the territory by placing heraldic arms on their maps. Indeed, Tudor cartographers had accomplished much the same effect when they placed the aristocracy's coats of arms above their manors on maps of the English counties, thereby signifying and reinforcing the social structure.

As a symbol, the royal arms carried with it implications of antiquity and power. Augustus Herrman, for example, left no doubt that the English controlled North America

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<sup>40</sup> Mark Wahrus, *Another America: Native American Maps and the History of Our Land*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997) 3-8, 21; Margaret Wickens Pierce, "Native Mapping in Southern New England Indian Deeds," in *Cartographic Encounters: Perspectives on Native American Mapmaking and Map Use*, G. Malcom Lewis, ed., (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 159-60; [John Smith?], *Proceedings of the English Colony*, ed. Tyler, 154-5; Cartier, "The Third Voyage of Discovery," in *The Voyages of Jacques Cartier*, ed. Cook, 102-4.

in his 1673 map of Virginia (Map 2). The cartographer positioned the king's arms prominently in the top-center of the map, where the reader would surely notice it and, ostensibly, understand the claims it made to English hegemony and sovereignty over the land. On an anonymous 1635 map of Maryland, likewise, the royal arms occupy nearly 10 percent of the entire surface, and are placed strikingly in the upper right-hand corner of the image (Map 3). John Smith employed the same method on the frontispiece to his *General Historie of Virginia* (Map 4). The engraver has sketched a westward-oriented map of the eastern coast of North America. A portrait of James I, flanked by his chaste predecessor, Elizabeth, on the left, and his successor, Charles I, on the right, is imposed over the map. Although the engraver did not use heraldic arms to demonstrate his message of English sovereignty, he made a clear statement about England's right to North America. Like the king's arms, these portraits serve as a stamp of ownership upon the land.<sup>41</sup>

The English monarchs were not the only individuals whose heraldic arms appeared on maps of Virginia and the Carolinas. For example, cartographer-cum-governor John White positioned Sir Walter Raleigh's coat of arms over the area that Raleigh had claimed (through his deputies) under the authority of letters patent from Elizabeth I (Maps 5 and 6). In the seventeenth century, cartographers attested to Cecil Calvert, Lord Baltimore's, ownership of and authority over Maryland by placing his crest and coat of arms over the colony. Herrman displayed Calvert's arms over his colony (Map 2), and the anonymous cartographer of "Lord Baltimore's map" placed his crest underneath the king's (Map 3). A cartouche bearing the crests of Carolina's eight Lords

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<sup>41</sup> Clarke, "Taking Possession," 457-64; Keller, Lissitzyn, and Mann, *Creation of Sovereignty Rights*, 25, Harley, *The New Nature of Maps*, 73-5, 119-37; Smith, *A General Historie of Virginia*, Frontispiece.

Proprietors occupies nearly a fifth of the entire “Generall Mapp of Carolina,” made by Richard Blome (Map 7). No less than the royal arms, the heraldry of armigerous proprietors buttress English claims to possession of Virginia. These symbols forcefully suggest that England, and no European prince or Indian cacique, had full right to and possession of the land. It mattered little that the Indians were not indeed subdued, as they forcefully demonstrated toward the blundering colonists at Roanoke and Jamestown, nor that Spain had not relinquished its claim; the maps were envisioning a future rather than mirroring contemporary reality.

In their portrayal of Indians, in addition, cartographers could deny the natives’ right to the land. If the Indians’ paganism and incivility disqualified them from landholding, a cartographer could enhance his imperialistic message by portraying the Indians as especially barbarous and godless savages. John Smith, for example, depicted a particularly savage-looking Susquehannock chief in his map of Virginia (Map 8). Wearing a bearskin draped over his back and a wolf’s head pendent around his neck, the Susquehannock could not possibly be confused with a civilized Christian. Ralph Hall, in his map of Virginia, also depicted a group of Indians dancing and sitting around a fire at “Their Coniuration,” making an obvious statement about the Indians’ heathenism (Map 9).

Ironically, portraying Indians as docile children could convey imperialism just as much as depicting them as dangerous and barbarous heathens. Docile and meek Indians, after all, could little be expected to resist colonists, especially since those Englishmen were seeking to save the native’s souls from darkness. Hakluyt, in fact, likens the “*peaceable lowly, milde, and gentle*” Indians to “*lambes*” susceptible to Spanish

*“dragons and wolves.”* Accordingly, Augustus Herrman presented a pair of Indians in his cartouche (Map 2). Although the male carries a bow, both figures are sheepish and sullen. Indeed, it is unclear whether the pair are children or are adults portrayed like children. In time, both the Wingadocians in Roanoke and the Powhatans in the Chesapeake amply disabused the English of their notions about Indian peacefulness and docility. Regardless of reality, decorative cartouches represented Indians as the cartographers wanted them to be.<sup>42</sup>

Cartographers could also signify English possession by arranging ships—flying the English flag conspicuously—off the coast of Virginia. Far from mere decorative embellishments to fill up the empty space of the ocean, the portrayal of English ships carried symbolic import. The placement of ships in harbors suggested that English already possessed and occupied the land. John and Virginia Farrar (Map 1), for example, placed ships flying St. George’s Cross off the coast of both Nova Albion and Virginia, suggesting that the English had right to all of the intervening land. Herrman similarly situated an English ship at the mouth of the Potomac River to suggest that the English held claim to the entire river (Map 2).

Ships demonstrated not only the English presence in the New World but their readiness and capacity to defend the colonies against European interlopers. Two warships trade broadsides at the bottom of the Farrars’ map, for example, serving to remind the reader of the English navy’s capacity and willingness to defend the colonies (Map 1). In addition to military might, ships also connoted economic exploitation and hence prosperity. The mercantilist system, like the one Hakluyt presaged in the

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<sup>42</sup> John Smith, “Description of Virginia and the Proceedings of the Colonie by Captain John Smith,” in *Narratives of Early Virginia*, ed. Tyler, 88; Hakluyt, *Discourse of Western Planting*, 52, 55, 108.

*Discourse of Western Planting*, required ships both to carry raw materials from the colonies and to return manufactured ones from the metropolis. More subtly, English ships, when portrayed alongside “primitive” Indian canoes, constituted a commentary on European cultural superiority. Contrasted with the sophisticated, ocean-going European sailing ships, the dugout “Indian Canoe made from a Tree,” as Herrman describes them, looked crude indeed and reinforced ethnocentric notions of superiority (Map 2).

Still other illustrations reinforced English claims and the imperialistic program. For example, Ralph Hall portrayed Jamestown, a settlement whose walls, a Spanish spy claimed, could be breached with a well-placed kick, as a fortified castle (Map 9). No matter how inaccurate the symbol was for the fledgling colonial outpost, the portrayal of Jamestown as a castle held psychological implications of permanency and authority. Depicted as a medieval fortress, Jamestown appeared to have always been there, commanding the peninsula. Given the English argument that legitimate possession required effective occupation, the use of a castle amply demonstrated English presence in the area. This theme is enhanced by the depiction of three armed English hunters or soldiers over those parts of the Chesapeake where English settlement was heaviest. The portrayal of new-world flora and fauna also gave the impression that the area was a fecund and profitable Eden. Hall, for example, portrays the Virginia tidewater region as a virtual zoo with boars, deer, goats, birds, and a leopard, while the Farrers include squirrels, foxes, rabbits, bear, and porcupines. More important, the maps also show a wide variety of trees, a commodity greatly lacking in the metropolis. Indeed, Hakluyt advocated the establishment of an American lumber industry which could supply the

necessary material, offer employment to Englishmen, and quickly make the colonies economically viable.<sup>43</sup>

If such artistic symbols failed to convey the justness and legitimacy of English claims and imperialism, cartographers could make explicit statements supporting imperialism by literally stating them in the written legends and text in the empty spaces of their maps. Over the coast of the “Sea of China and the Indies,” for example, John and Virginia Farrer wrote, “Sir Francis Drake was on this sea and landed Ano. 1577 in 57. deg. where he took possession in the name of Q. Eliza. Calling it new Albion,” and included a portrait of the intrepid explorer (Map 1). Such statements were even less ambiguous assertions of English possession. The Farrers also testified to the New World’s profitability, noting that English traders could traverse the continent in ten days and open trading relations with Asia “to the exceeding benefit of Great Brittain, and joye of all true English.”

Augustus Herrman expressed a similar sentiment when he noted that the “Spaniard is possessed with great Store of Minneralls at the other side of these Mountaines [the Appalachians],” and speculated that the English might find such resources in Virginia (Map 2). In support of his assertion, Herrman noted on his map that “The Goulden or Brass Hill” was so named because a spring originating from the hill “issued forth a glitteringe Stuff Sand like unto the Frylings of Brass” and because “the very ground seemed to be couered over with the same Brassy stuff.” By noting the spot in western Virginia where Governor William Berkley overtook Powhatan chief

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<sup>43</sup> Don Diego de Molina, “Letter of Diego de Molina,” in *Narratives of Early Virginia*, ed., Tyler, 221; Christine Green, “The Illustrated Map: Cartography and Power in Seventeenth-Century Virginia,” (M.A thesis, Dept. of Anthropology, College of William and Mary, 2000), 27-32; Hakluyt, *Discourse of Western Planting*, 79-80.

Abatschakin after the second Powhatan uprising in 1644, Herrman subtly reminded his readers that the English had conquered the once-powerful Indians and reduced them to tributaries.

Written Latin legends and texts further reinforced English notions of the cultural superiority that justified their subjugation of Indian peoples. Latin had been the language of the culturally advanced Romans, the universal Church, and the *lingua franca* for learned and civilized people throughout Europe. By using Latin for place names, legends, and titles, cartographers could invoke ethnocentric pride and a sense of superiority.

When the original English settlers arrived at the southernmost tidal river flowing into Chesapeake Bay, they “set up a Crosse at the head of this River, naming it Kings River, where we proclaimed James King of England to have the most right to it.” Whether the colonists appreciated the irony or not, they had just renamed a river previously named after Powhatan, one of the most powerful Indian chiefs in eastern North America, after the English monarch, presaging the transfer of authority from the Indians to the English. As White’s and Smith’s maps amply attest, the natives named the places where they lived, grew crops, fished, and hunted (Maps 5,6,8). Ethnological evidence suggests that Indians named places according to the resources that could be found there, and consequently these place names constituted “verbal maps” of the landscapes.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Percy, “Observations of Master George Percy” 18; Cronon, *Changes in the Land*, 65-66; Margaret Wickens Pearce, “Native Mapping in Southern New England Deeds,” in *Cartographic Encounters: Perspectives on Native American Mapmaking and Map Use*, ed. Malcom Lewis, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 157-86, 159; Mark Wahrus, *Another America: Native American Maps and the History of Our Land* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997), 3.



After the English arrived, however, they quickly replaced many—but not all—Indian names with English ones. Within weeks of their arrival, Jamestown’s original settlers had named two capes and two rivers after English royalty (Capes Henry and Charles, King’s and Henry River), a point after an emotion that the colonists felt (Point Comfort), and an island after an incident wherein a stingray stung John Smith while he spear-fished with his sword (Stingray Isle). Such renaming had symbolic and psychological implications. By nonchalantly discarding Indian place names and replacing them with English ones, English colonists asserted their sovereignty over the area. “Naming was possessing,” Harley noted, suggesting that the act of naming a place suggested some degree of sovereignty over that place. John Smith likened the process of renaming to baptizing the land when he entreated Prince Charles, then Prince of Wales, ““to change their [the Indians’] Barbarous [place] names, for such English, as Posterity may say, Prince Charles was their Godfather.”” Just as a godfather named an Anglican child when he was baptized, the English would rename the land and hence convert it from heathenism to Christian civility. Harley even went so far as to assert that this suppression of indigenous place names amounted to “cultural genocide.” Such renaming signaled the colonists’ intentions to dominate the land, and belied their belief that they enjoyed “the most right to it.”<sup>45</sup>

Except for Robert Tindall, who named a point and shoals after himself in his “Draughte of Virginia,” mapmakers did not actually name New World features (Map 10). Insofar as English cartographers replicated the colonists’ place names on their maps, however, they perpetuated and reinforced English assumptions about legitimate

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<sup>45</sup> Percy, “Observations of Master George Percy,” 18; John Smith, quoted in C.M. Matthew, *Place Names of the English Speaking World* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1972), 184; Harley, *The New Nature of Maps*, 178-187; J.H. Andrews, “Introduction,” to *Ibid.*, 25.

possession of the land. When cartographers wrote “Virginia” in a large font across the top of the map, they made an explicit statement about English sovereignty no less dramatic or obvious than placing heraldic arms over the landscapes. Early colonists, and mapmakers by extension, honored not only the Virgin Queen but her successors on their maps, naming rivers after James I, and his anticipated heir Henry, and naming a cape after James’s actual heir Charles. Indeed, these maps leave little doubt that the princes of England had “most right” to the Chesapeake. Yet even those names that did not invoke English royalty enhanced England’s claim to the land when placed on the map. Even when individual colonists named features after themselves or their friends, such as Smith’s Isles and Russells Cliffs, or after historical incidents such as that on Stingray Island, these place-names essentially “Anglicized” the land and made it less threatening. These names suggest that England had a presence on the land, a prerequisite to legitimate possession according to the dominative code, and a history in the area. Regardless of their origins, the use of English place-names served to remove doubt that either European rivals or Indians owned the land.<sup>46</sup>

What mapmakers omitted from their maps, Harley further argued, buttressed English claims to the land as much as what they included. Indeed, cartographic “silences”—conspicuous omissions from maps—can be read as explicit statements about the legitimacy of English claims. Just as cartographers of the English shires omitted references to the penurious tenants and peasants, mapmakers omitted the Indians’ presence from the land, lending support to English claims that the territory was *terra nullius*. To an extent, the early maps of Virginia contain these “emphatic silences.” In John White’s maps of the coast, for example, the cartographer included no references to

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<sup>46</sup> Matthews, *Place Names of the English-Speaking World*, 180-85.

Indian presence on the land, except for place names (Map 5.6). Instead of Indians, White reproduced the royal arms and those of Raleigh. Although Augustus Herrman portrayed Indian villages on the landscape, these occupied the margins of English settlement, areas in which the colonists, at least temporarily, had little interest (Map 2). These examples appear to confirm Harley's assertions about cartographic silences.<sup>47</sup>

If maps were, indeed, intentional statements about the righteousness of conquest, whom were they designed to convince and how likely were those audiences to be convinced? Certainly, maps did little to convince the Indians that they did not legitimately possess usufruct rights to the land on which they lived, gardened, and hunted. Although the ability of Indians to produce maps amounted, in one historian's estimation, to a "universal trait," the Indians traditionally maintained orally-preserved "mental maps" and were not accustomed to using, nor likely to be persuaded by, the kind of graphic maps produced by Europeans, if they ever saw the maps in the first place.<sup>48</sup>

English cartography was more effectively deployed against other Europeans, both domestic and abroad. As Benjamin Schmidt notes, "maps played an important part in colonial diplomacy, employed in the settlement of border disputes, the negotiation of treaties, and the like." If a national disputant could produce early detailed maps of and demonstrate its superior geographic knowledge about an area, it could considerably strengthen its pretensions to the antiquity and originality of its territorial claims. Indeed, Schmidt concludes that the Dutch, early modern cartographers extraordinaire, vexed the

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<sup>47</sup> Harley, *The New Nature of Maps*, 105-107, 145.

<sup>48</sup> G. Malcom Lewis, "Introduction," in *Cartographic Encounters* ed. Lewis, 2; Wahrus, *Another America*, 3.

English with their constant barrage of maps asserting Dutch possession of the New Netherlands and environs.<sup>49</sup>

Thanks to the printing press and the development of the European book trade, English cartographers could communicate their imperial messages to the general public—or at least those capable of purchasing the newly available printed maps and atlases. Through original maps and pirated copies, maps and their claims about the nature of English claims, spread throughout Europe. Such propaganda, evidently was not only aimed abroad but also toward skeptics within the kingdom. Englishmen “*who through Mallice or Ignorance*” gainsaid English colonization as an “*vnnationall and vunlawful vndestaking*” needed as much cartographic persuasion as rival Europeans.<sup>50</sup>

A survey of English cartographic representation, then, appears to validate many of J. B. Harley’s conclusions. But these maps do not bear uncomplicated testimony to the innate rhetorical nature of maps. Indeed, they often contradict Harley’s theories and give credence to his many critics among the ranks of cartographic historians. In particular, historians have questioned whether maps convey the kind ideological import that Harley attributes to them, and if they do, how effectively they do so.

Fundamentally, some of Harley’s critics question whether maps make any extra-geographical claims at all. Rather than ideological assertions, the elements we have identified—cartouches, geographic representation, silences—might simply be attractive decorations added to make the maps more aesthetically desirable. After all, the maps discussed here were not simply helpful geographic instruments, they were also commodities to be bought and sold and artwork to be appreciated. Doubtlessly, a map

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<sup>49</sup> Benjamin Schmidt, “Mapping an Empire: Cartographic and Colonial Rivalry in Seventeenth-Century Dutch and English North America.” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 54 (July 1997). 549-78: 571-3.

<sup>50</sup> Strachey, *Historie of Travell into Virginia*, 7-8.

festooned with exotic creatures and peoples would be more attractive—and hence more profitable—than undecorated ones. Rather than corroborate a map’s overall “message,” these decorations were simply dictated by market demands and aesthetic considerations. If not completely value-free, they were surely not heavily freighted with ideological import. After all, cartographers abhor empty spaces in maps, and their attempts to fill those spaces might say as much about their aesthetic sensibilities and their patrons’ tastes than their imperialistic desires. Many of the apparently rhetorical images are simply stereotyped or stock images employed by early-modern cartographers and hence do not represent particular claims but merely conform to the visual language of cartography. For example, Ralph Hall’s use of a castle to represent the beleaguered Jamestown could be interpreted as an explicit indication of the English presence and military might, or as simply as the use of current cartographic iconography to represent cities with the depiction of a town (Map 9) (see page 40 above).<sup>51</sup>

Furthermore, it is far from clear that the simple act of replacing Indian place-names with English toponyms amounted to any sort of “cultural genocide.” The Indians for whom these toponyms represented a “mental map,” would not cease to refer to individual places in their native tongue long after the explorers had christened them anew and the cartographers had repeated such names. Powhatan’s Virginian Algonquians certainly did not cease referring to the Powhatan River as such simply because English named it the King’s, then James River. Besides, many Indian place names *did* survive the Indians’ removal and have survived four centuries of Anglo-American occupation. Chesapeake Bay, the Rappahannock and Potomac rivers, and a plethora of other

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<sup>51</sup> Bernard Klein, *Maps and the Writing of Space in Early Modern England and Ireland* (New York: Palgrave, 2001) 13.

geographic features retain Indian place-names, albeit in a terribly corrupted manner. Of course, the simple act of renaming a place was not sufficient to dispossess the Indians of the land—that required muskets, smallpox, and treaties.

Harley's theory of "emphatic silences" has attracted perhaps the most animated criticism, both factually and conceptually. If Harley was correct that cartographic silences constituted attempts to marginalize Indians or suggest their absence from the land, then we would expect Indians to be either absent from the maps of Virginia and the Carolinas or portrayed only on the fringes of those maps. Yet this is not always the case. In DeBry's engraving of White's map of Roanoke, for example, the Indians appear to be very much present (Map 11). In the map, the cartographer positions some of White's portraits of Wingandocians—but no Europeans—on the mainland. In fact, there are no signs of Englishmen on the map except for some ships, all of which ride without the Outer Banks. Within the reefs, a number of Indian canoes patrol the waters. The Outer Banks serve as a clear line of demarcation, with the Indians on one side and Englishmen on the other. Smith not only depicted Chief Powhatan sitting in his council and a giant and well-armed Iroquoian Susquehannock, but included hundreds of Indian place names (Map 8). Indians are present likewise on Hall's (Map 9), Herrman's (Map 2), the Farrers' (Map 1) and other maps of the area, belying Harley's theories about silences. Far from being symbolically removed from the land in maps, the natives are very much present.<sup>52</sup>

Yet even if the Indians were erased from the maps, many cartographic historians question how such "silences" should be interpreted. Compelling as Harley's argument is, it can scarcely find definite verification because it relies on negative evidence.

Exclusions from the map could very well testify to a cartographer's intention to push the

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<sup>52</sup> Harley, *The New Nature of Maps*, 105-107, 145.

undeserving Indians from land that God has set aside for the English, but they could just as likely testify to the cartographer's ignorance of the location of Indian towns or the map's spatial limitations. Early modern maps, often sketched without the benefit of geometric projection by cartographers who had never seen the territory mapped, frequently misrepresented territory. In Smith's map of Virginia, for example, the Delmarva Peninsula bulges on the eastern, or Atlantic side, and the coast line remains undefined and vague. Certainly, Smith had no hidden agenda for badly misrepresenting the peninsula, but he nonetheless does so through ignorance instead of through design? If Smith left native villages off the map, consequently, ignorance might as likely have accounted for the absence as a hidden agenda.

Without explanations of the cartographer's intentions, then, scholars can not confidently determine why the natives are absent. As cartographic historian J.H. Andrews notes in his introduction to Harley's collected essays, "we do not become liars by failing to give an exhaustive account of the universe every time we open our mouths," and neither can cartographers be expected to represent *everything* in the mapped territory. Harley's contention is also contradicted in part by his claim that natives were presented as savage "others" in maps; how could Indians be represented as beasts and absent at the same time? Harley himself owns that such silences cannot ultimately "offer 'provable' generalizations," and we are compelled to agree with him. Silences, intriguing though they may be, involve a disturbing indeterminacy.<sup>53</sup>

Setting aside questions of whether or not these maps carried implicit messages, it is unclear what exactly Harley believes the nature of the relationship between the cartographer and the message of the map to be. At times, Harley describes maps to be

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<sup>53</sup> J.H. Andrews, "Introduction," in Harley, *The New Nature of Maps*, 15-20.

endowed with a “hidden agenda,” they are “propaganda” aimed at deceiving the unwary about the nature of empire. In this sense, we can imagine conspiratorial cartographers scheming with engravers, statesmen, and patrons to program their maps with persuasive visual signals about the social nature of the land exhibited. At other times, however, Harley describes maps as “social constructions” which reflect the culturally embedded assumptions of the cartographers, perhaps without the cartographer even realizing or intending such messages. The emphatic statements made in maps, then, are not the product of a conspiring mapmaker but of an early-modern English cartographer, situated in early-modern society and holding early-modern beliefs. What messages are present in the images are there not because the cartographer intended to make a statement about the justness of colonialism, but because such messages found their way into the maps without the cartographer’s intention or knowledge. The second version, a “weak”<sup>54</sup> position, seems more palatable to the skeptical, while the first requires some ambitious intellectual leaps. After all, maps are not produced by one individual cartographer but rather by a cadre of explorers, cartographers, engravers, and patrons, and hence it is difficult to assign a common intent for each map; there are simply too many individuals involved to conclude that maps contain a single, unified message. Unfortunately, Harley did not live to write a consistent monograph-length presentation of his theories, and all we have are his sometimes-inconsistent essays written over a span of several years in which, presumably, his thinking matured and developed.<sup>55</sup>

It is further difficult to ascertain how effective or instrumental maps were in convincing the skeptical or reassuring the believers. How likely is it that a French

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<sup>54</sup> I mean “weak” in the philosophical sense, meaning that it easier to accept than a comparatively controversial or “strong” argument.

<sup>55</sup> Harley, *The New Nature of Maps*, 65, 128.



ambassador would change his position regarding the limits of New France simply by looking at an English map of New England? Would one of those Englishmen who criticized their sovereign's imperial pretensions change his mind about the Indians' right to their land after seeing a map where the royal arms were plastered over the territory? Did such individuals realize that direct statements were being made? Cartography does not allow for the kind of precision and subtlety of communication that other writing and other media provide. Indeed, as Andrews observes, "It is hard to resist the conclusion that any moralist [or territorial expansionist presumably] with a deeply felt message would do well to express himself in words rather than in maps." Hakluyt's *Discourse of Western Planting*, more than John Smith's map of Virginia, in other words, offered convincing arguments about the need for expansion and the legitimacy of English claims.<sup>56</sup>

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Although these arguments do much to complicate our understanding of maps, they do not ultimately destroy Harley's arguments. While we may not be able definitively to "prove" all of Harley's assertions, our understanding of early-modern imperial aspirations, the imperial commitments of many of the cartographers, and the overwhelming testimony of the maps themselves suggest that Harley's ideas are not wrongheaded. Rather than condemn Harley, these issues serve as a cautionary note in interpreting maps and remind scholars to approach these documents with appropriate skepticism because, after all, a pipe is sometimes just a pipe. As Paul Laxton, editor of

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<sup>56</sup> Andrews, "Introduction," in Harley, *The New Nature of Maps*, 20.

Harley's collected essays, notes, Harley's theory have enjoyed uncritical approval long enough and should be exposed to critical reevaluation.<sup>57</sup>

Maps, then, like authorizing documents, ceremonies of possession, and effective possession, belong to the lexicon by which European powers psychologically and legally acquired New World territory from its native inhabitants. As such, maps offer us an index as to the nature and degree of imperial aspiration among early modern Europeans, and a window on the European colonization of North America. They do indeed show that cartographers and the societies to which they belonged shared certain behaviors toward the Indian peoples and toward the land itself. Granted, maps tell us little that we do not already know about early modern imperialism; tracts, books, and colonial records amply testify and illuminate these traditions. Yet deconstructing maps permits us a more nuanced image of colonialism and allows us to understand how the English claimed the New World.

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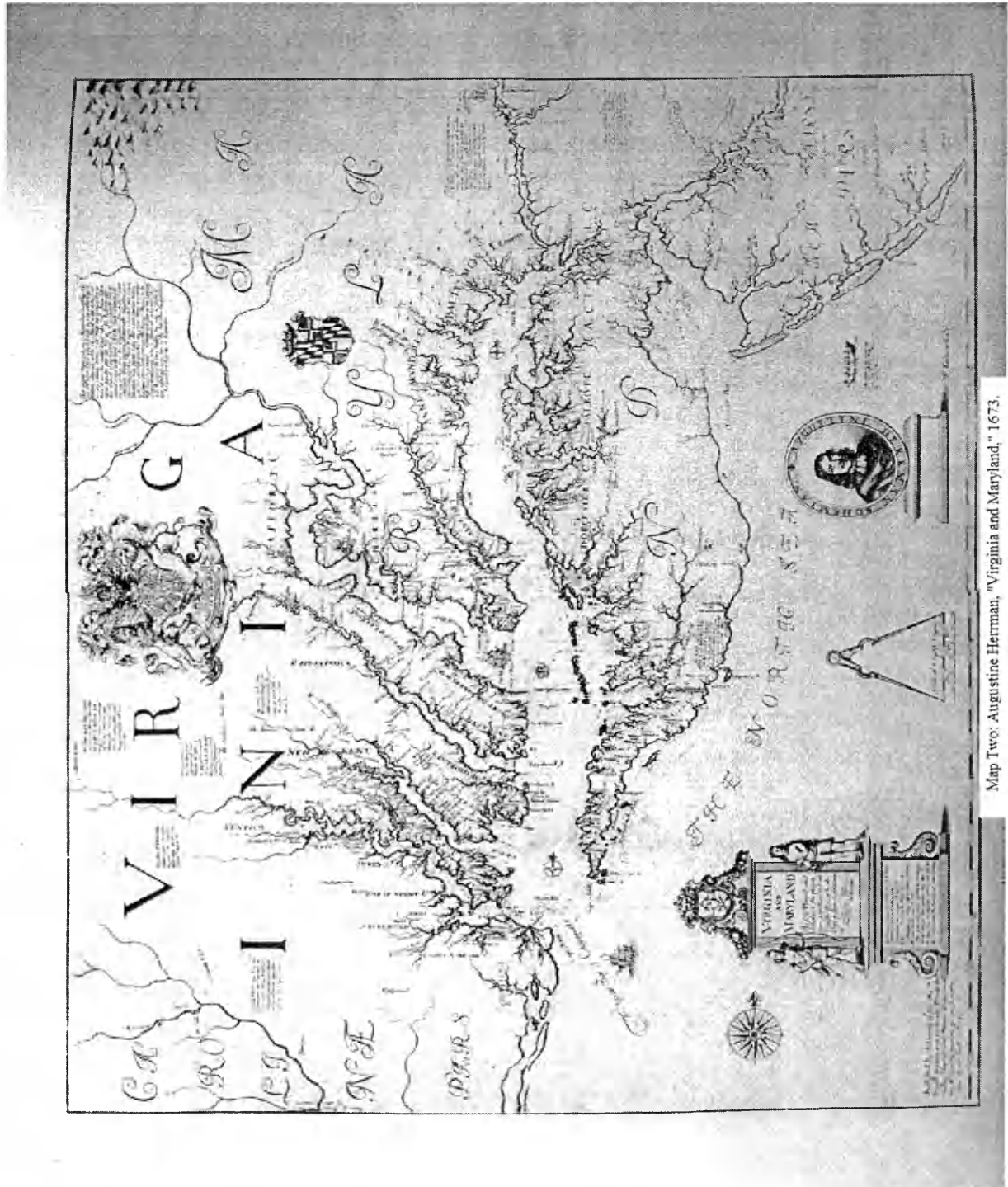
<sup>57</sup> Paul Laxton, "Preface" in Harley, *The New Nature of Maps*, ix-x.

## APPENDIX

### MAPS

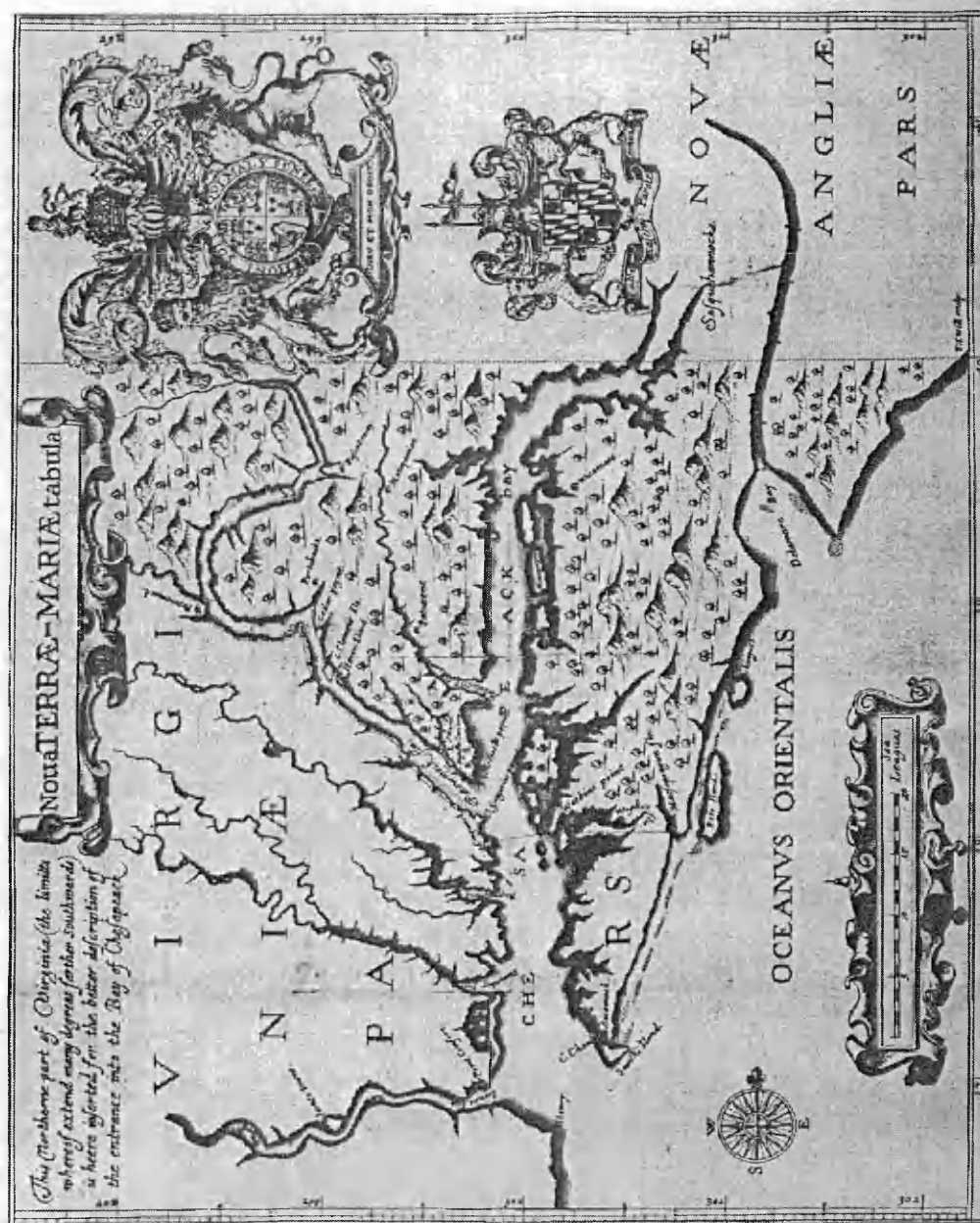


Map 2



Map Two: Augustine Herman, "Virginia and Maryland," 1673.

Map 3



Map Three: Anon., "Noua Terrae-Mariae tabula," 1635.

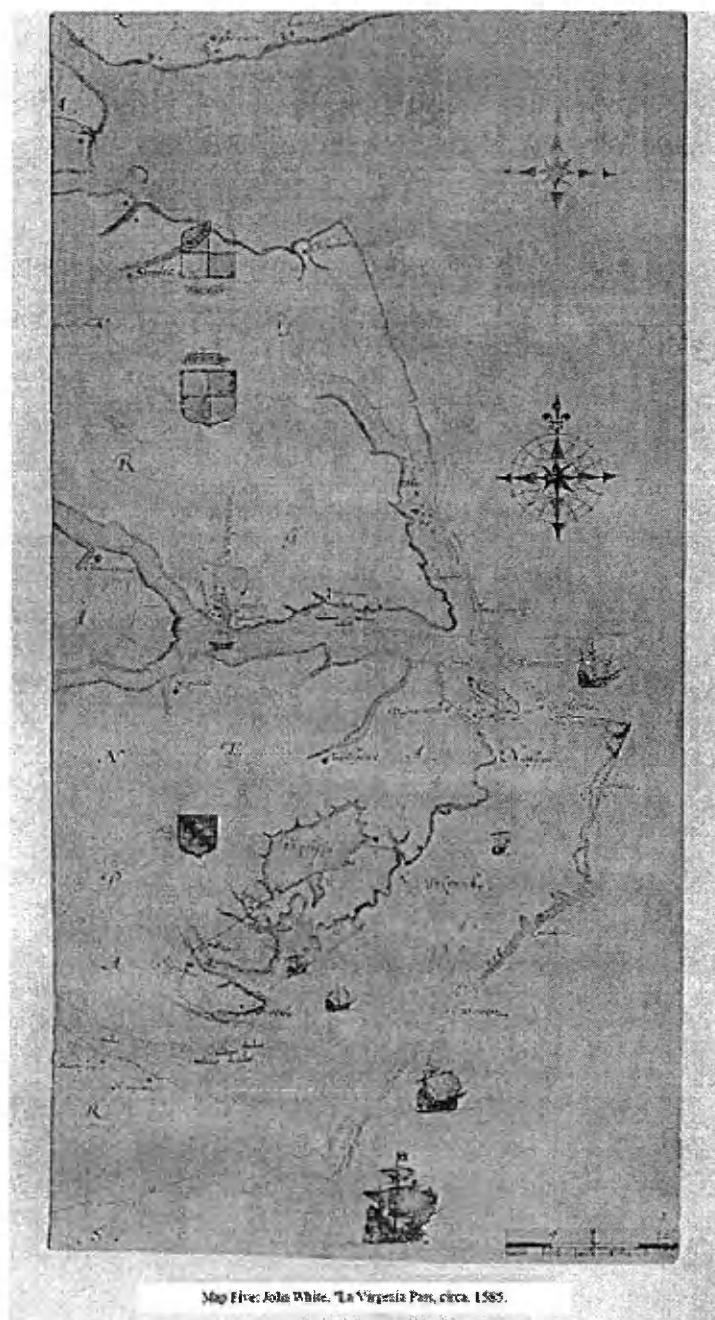
Map 4



Map Four: John Smith. Frontispiece, The Generall Historie of Virginia..., 1624.



Map 5

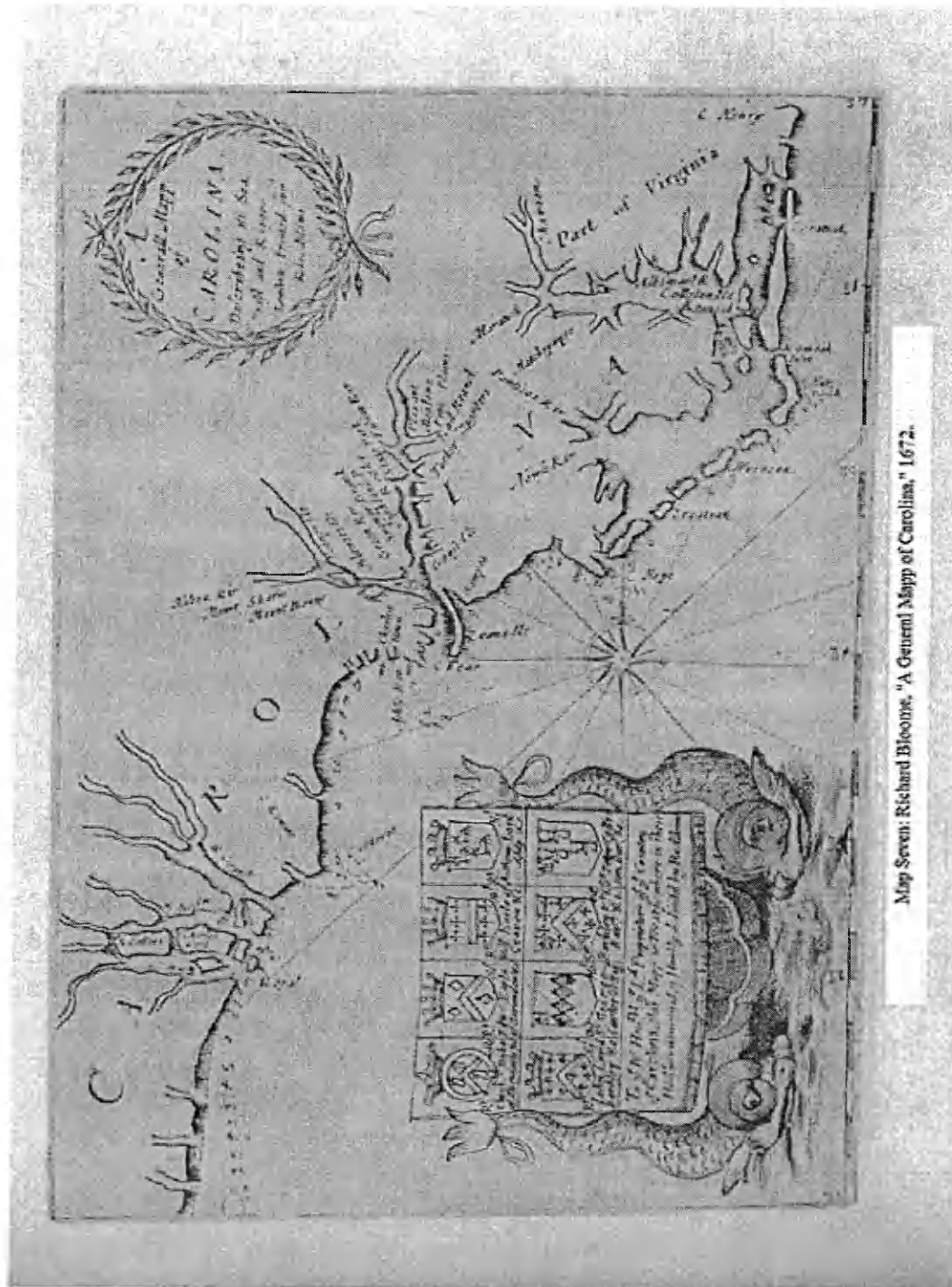




Map 6



Map 7



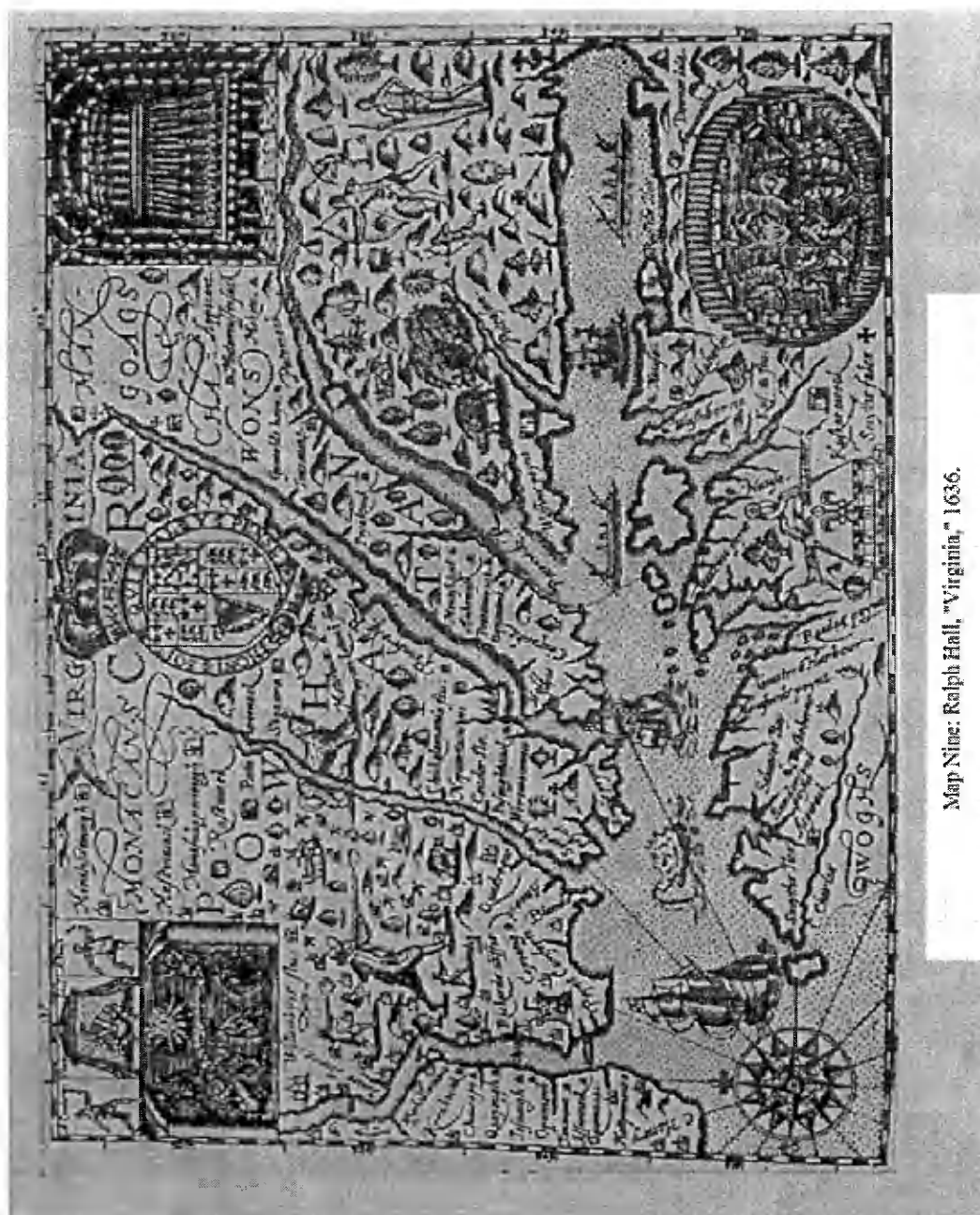
Map Seven: Richard Bloome, "A General Map of Carolina," 1672.

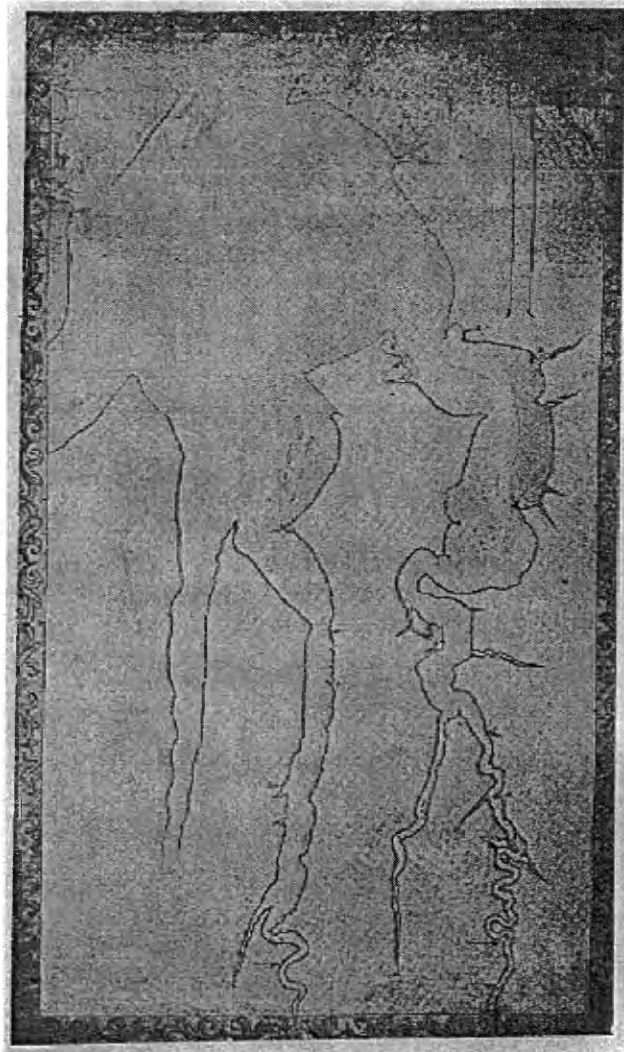
Map 8



Map Eight: John Smith, "Map of Virginia," 1612.

Map 9

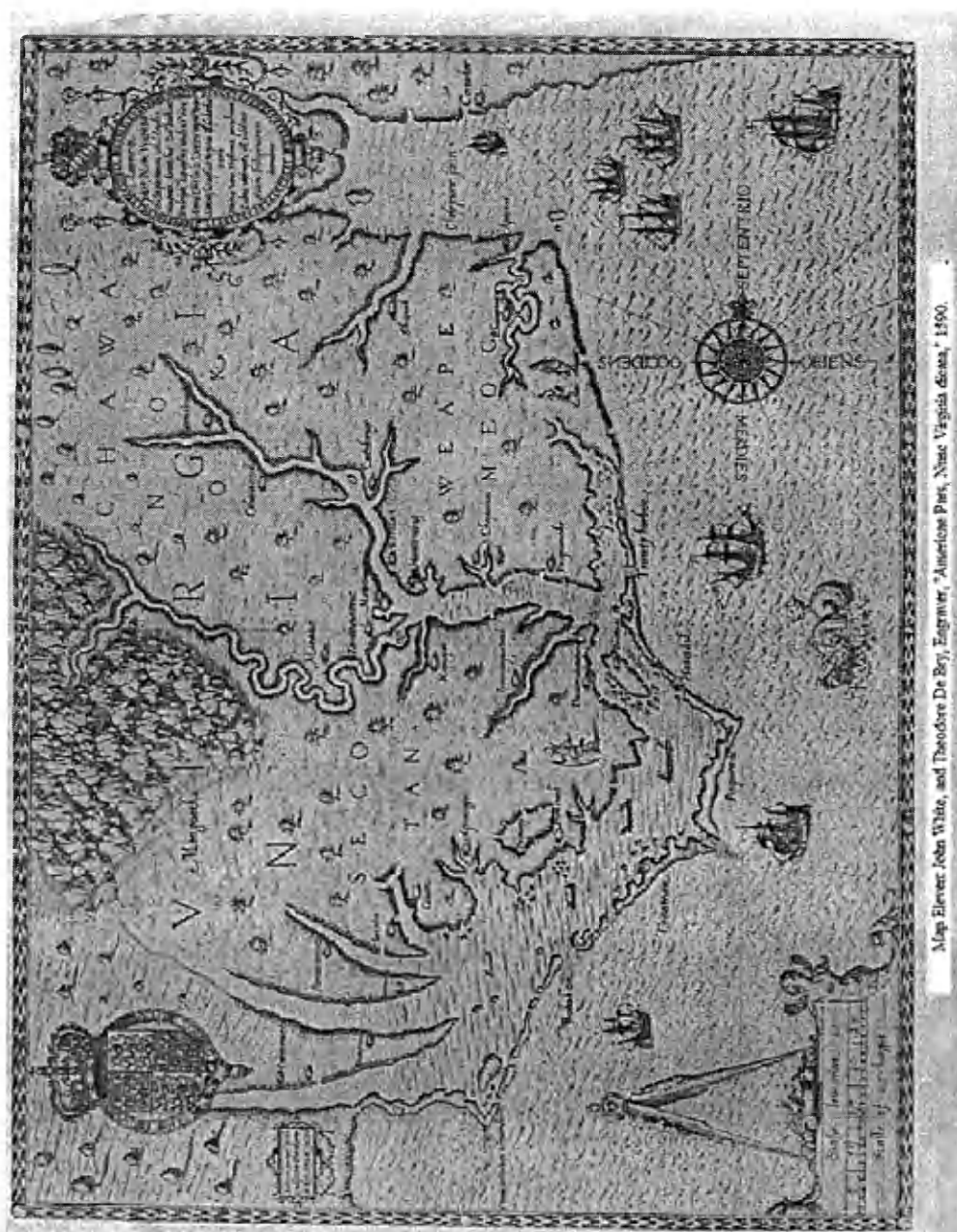


**Map 10**

Map Ten: Robert Tindall, "A Draught of Virginia," 1608.



### Map 11



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